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ANTHONY'S FORTUNE.

CHAPTER V.

ON reaching the yard, Snidgery turned off and unceremoniously entered the watchman's house, but Anthony walked down toward the water and paused at the side of his wife. The afternoon was soft and warm, such as sometimes comes in the early year with a promise of spring, and there was no discomfort or danger in sitting, as she did, at the edge of the wharf and with no precaution against chill but the shawl about her head. A slight movement alone showed that she was conscious of her husband's approach. She did not look up at him, even when he spoke, but remained gazing blankly at the further shore, with her fingers loosely interlocked in her lap. There were rings on them, with sham jewels whose dull lustre somehow suggested a cruel comparison with her eyes.

"Moping alone, Aggie?" said Anthony quietly. "It is a bad habit to get into. Where is your father?"

"Indoors, I suppose."

"You should keep him company, now that you are back again. He must want cheering up after having been alone so long. Come, let us go in; he will think we are deserting him again."

"No," she replied indifferently; "he wants me no more than you do. Leave me alone, if not in contentment, at least in peace, can't you?"

"A foolish fancy, and an unkind

one," said Anthony, seating himself by her. "Neither of us has ever given you cause to think so. Come, forget the past; do not let it disturb the present, or you, who have lived so much in the future, must renounce all dreams, and that is a poor life to lead."

With an impatient gesture she moved a little away from him. He went on gravely, not pressing himself upon her, but talking as one might to a fretful child,—patiently, and with an added touch of sadness he would not have had appear, but which was there nevertheless. "We must help one another. Your father is old; I have a great deal to learn in many ways before I can earn enough to satisfy your natural desires, and to place you where it has always been my wish to see you; you are unwell; a little time will set us right again, maybe, but not while we bow helplessly to the first blow of misfortune."

"First!" she cried scornfully, striking her hand feverishly upon the ground. "The thousand and first in a conspiracy to stifle my ambitions and hide my gifts! It has been the same always, ever since I left home and began my life. And you, you who should have been my protector and vindicator, you stood by in your paltry content with whatever they chose to give you, and watched me crushed. I could have endured that, and risen despite them all; but what next? You drag me

back to this hovel, watch me wither in obscurity, and then,—preach liveliness! A pretty husband!”

Her voice rose to a shriek, but some power he possessed over her, even in her wildest moments, reasserted itself.

“Look at me, Agatha,” he said. She shivered, and slowly turned her head. “What you say is untrue, and you know it. You know that rest was necessary to us both, and that until this became so apparent that it could be no longer ignored, I gave way against my wiser promptings. To persist would have meant utter breakdown; our resources were pitifully small and irregular, and were growing worse instead of better. And why? You were not physically equal to the work, however unimpaired your talents might be. Managers saw this; they are men of business, and must act according to their code. Until you are able to resume work with a full equipment of strength, and fight the battle with your rivals upon equal terms, they are justified in refusing their countenance, as I am justified in bringing you here. Now, Aggie, you are a woman of discernment; be reasonable, and tell me if this is not so? Just a month or two of quiet, and you are fit again to excel.”

The mingled firmness and flattery subdued the distraught brain, as he meant it should. He was so careful and kind with her; not a movement of her lips escaped his vigilance when he was by; of his whole duty as a husband not an item was omitted, or failed of leaving its mark upon him. His face was cold, even when his manner was kindest; it showed a loveless acquiescence in the demands of honour; the ashes of a boyish passion that had burned itself out in a gradually tainting atmosphere, and now lay dead upon his heart.

“It is easy enough talking when I have no choice but to obey.”

“To agree, Aggie, and thank me after. I am willing to abide the issue if you will only refrain from thwarting me.”

“Well, we shall see,” she replied sullenly. “If I die in the meanwhile, as is more than probable, there will be none to reproach and I dare say plenty to comfort you; a young widower is an interesting object, isn’t he?”

“Hush, Aggie, hush! Has there ever been cause for either of us to speak like that?”

She dropped into her former listless demeanour, seeming to forget his presence. The tugs, snorting upon the turbid river, were beginning to show their lights, and a string of blundering barges, from which a dog barked at them, grounded upon the mud near by; the evening mists began to fall cold and dank, and she gathered her shawl closer about her head and went in, with her husband at her side.

Without too implicitly crediting the popular belief that extremes meet and that ill-assorted companions are assorted the best, it is only on some such vague theory that many incongruous affinities can be accounted for,—as, for instance, the friendship between Snidgery and Scripture Soffit, so diametrically opposite, as they were, in every attribute; the one keen, rough, business-like, and congenitally cynical, as all men must become, no matter their degree, who traffic much with their fellows; the other dreamy, unselfish, absolutely unpractical, wholly gentle. Yet they were the best of friends; and more than once, unknown to the beneficiary, had Snidgery relaxed the strict rules of commercial instinct,—which enjoin that each shall work for himself and the Devil shall take the hindmost

—to float his less vigilant comrade over the shoals and quicksands of the stream of life. Soffit had begun the world as a choir-boy; subsequently he had been advanced to the post of clerk in a City church, and in that office, so congenial to his tastes and studious leanings, he had passed many years beneath the noses of many incumbents, till a legend had grown up to the effect that, at some period before the era of history, he had been planted upon that spot and the sacred edifice created round him. At an early stage in his *quasi*-clerical career, some genius had dubbed him with the nickname of Scripture, impelled thereto by his knowledge of sacred ritual, his classical attainments, and the habit he early contracted of quoting half unconsciously, in and out of season, scraps from his readings. It stuck so firmly, as nicknames sometimes will, that it became irremovable: its application could not escape the dullest; and his baptismal appellation, if he ever possessed such, which some were inclined to deny, lapsed into oblivion. As Scripture he was fated to remain, but, alas, not as a parish clerk. It fell out that the last rector to whom Scripture Soffit responded was a young man, moving, as he himself averred, with the spirit of the age; he was characterised also by long hair, an ascetic expression, an immense belief in his own infallibility, and an only less overpowering passion for strange ritual and vestments. Like most gentle natures, Scripture Soffit could rouse himself astonishingly upon a few points, and his new spiritual master touched them like an irritant. He did not hesitate to rise in his wrath, and denounce progressive sacerdotalism and all its ways; a terrific argument, in which Scripture forgot alike his meekness and his respect, followed, culminating in his dismissal, with a

motherless baby-girl dependent upon his helplessness.

Though he never for a moment regretted his action, he began thenceforward to appreciate the radical difference underlying theoretical acceptance and militant championship of any principle, and to ponder with a sort of surprise (for the question had never struck him before) what various interpretations the abstract virtue known as truth will bear. The rector took one view, he another; they had come to no decision more satisfactory than agreeing to differ, and to differ apart; that was the rub, for academic questions fail to engross when bread cannot be got to nourish the speculative faculties. Worse than all, there was the little girl, already growing pretty and precocious, crying to his ineptitude for shelter and food. Had not Snidgery bestirred himself, he would have suffered sorely for his conscience-sake; but that gentleman, after lavishing certain jewels of rhetoric in his favourite style upon the customs of fools, contrived to secure him the custodianship of Rosebank Wharf. At the first blush, a more misplaced choice would scarcely seem conceivable, but Snidgery knew the conditions of the employment; the work was practically nothing, the pay, if small, was regular, and the intervals of seclusion, when the dilapidated wharf was unlet, constituted an added inducement. Scripture Soffit, delighted and grateful, entered upon his duties, such as they were, at once; and from them, with his tattered and well-beloved volumes surrounding him, and his child growing up beneath his eyes, he had never since moved. Even when the climax occurred, which another less kind and more clear-sighted could have long foreseen, and the wilful child, become the discontented young woman, left him to follow her misguided bent among a company

of strolling players, he remained with his books to await the triumphant return she had predicted; and he was there, ready with words of welcome and comfort, when she came back, crazed, defeated, but not disillusioned. Such was Scripture Soffit's history up to now, when he stood blinking at some recent utterance of Snidgery, and the subject of their discourse cut its thread.

"That's right, my dear," said the old man; "come in out of the cold. Here's Mr. Snidgery come to see you, and surprised to find such a healthy face, I'll be bound, after all your travels."

The entirely obvious nod and wink with which this mendacious assertion was accompanied, made no impression upon the literal Mr. Snidgery.

"Showing up at the wharf again, Aggie?" he enquired, with a keen glance at her. "And a good job too; you and me are quite strangers. If I was your father, I'd tie you up by a rope in the yard, so as to know that I'd got a daughter. You're as bad as a commercial traveller, without the profits."

"It's such a lively place to come to, Mr. Snidgery, isn't it?" retorted Agatha, rousing up, as she always did, under the impulse of society. "And such charming conversation!"

"For common sense 'tis," replied Snidgery imperturbably; "there you're right enough; but as for fal-lals, there's little enough of them, I'm free to own, or fashion either. As for poetry, which used to be in your line, your father will spout it by the yard; ain't he good enough?"

"We had nothing to do, so I was reading aloud to entertain her just before you arrived," said Soffit; "and we only broke off on account of her needing exercise you know, Josh, and taking a walk in the yard. Listen to this," he continued eagerly, taking a

volume from the mantel-piece. "Just listen a moment; it would soothe the saddest breast—"

"All right, Scripture, all right," interrupted Snidgery. "Let's have that another time. I've come here to talk business, and I want you to attend; if Aggie don't like it, she'd better go and lay down."

"About me?" asked Agatha, quickly. "If it is, I mean to hear; no settling things behind my back; you'll be up to some trickery."

"About all of you, if you don't fancy starvation," said Snidgery bluntly. "Smith, here, must get something to do, mustn't he?"

"Only until you are well enough for us to work in concert, Aggie," interposed Anthony, who had been attentive to her growing irritation. It was palpable that Snidgery chafed her unendurably. He had not the tact to perceive the effect of his tone; and in no case would he have been at the trouble to soften it, for her pretensions aroused his contempt, and her desertion of his old friend for ridiculous impossibilities, as he deemed them, made him angry. Moreover, her ailment was of a nature he could not understand or rate at its full sinister significance, and she, on her part, had known him so long as to care not what she said to him or in whose presence she said it. Anthony made her sit by him, and silenced Snidgery by a look. Then he spoke to her in a low voice until she was passive and the dull scowl passed from her face, giving it back once more a mocking semblance of the beauty that was almost wholly gone.

"Well, are you ready?" enquired Snidgery, when he considered he had waited long enough.

"Quite, quite, Mr. Snidgery," responded Anthony, looking up.

"And *that's* all right," said Snidgery. "I've been talking over

matters with Scripture, and what I want to know, as well as him, though he won't say so, is,—have you got any idea of the next thing to turn your attention to?"

"Of course he has, Josh," interpolated Scripture triumphantly before Anthony could reply. "Lor! how did I come to forget it, and such a first-rate profession too as I have heard it to be!"

"Give it a name," said Snidgery.

"Barristering."

"Eh?"

"Practising at the bar," explained Scripture, under the impression his uneducated friend required enlightenment; "a sort of solicitor, Josh, only with better fees and less work."

Snidgery expressed his appreciation of this glowing prospect in a dismal groan. "Look at 'em," he exclaimed, throwing up his arms and apostrophising the ceiling; "only just look at 'em! What a set of innocents! It's enough to make one believe in fairy-tales!"

Poor old Scripture, upon his disclosure being received with such scant respect, collapsed utterly. He had, with good reason, a high opinion of Snidgery's knowledge of worldly matters, and the scorn of his proposition from such a source destroyed his cheerfulness at a blow. He blinked and rubbed his hands together in the most apologetic and depressing way, murmuring to himself, as a sort of mechanical consolation: "Ah well, it can't be helped; there must be something else. He dare do all that may become a man,—who dares do more is none."

"I was called to the bar just before my marriage," said Anthony, with a reassuring nod for his father-in-law; "that is what he means; but I am afraid that's not likely to be worth very much just at present. There is no need for your ridicule, Mr. Snidgery;

we are all liable to make mistakes, and I dare say that there are matters in which Mr. Soffit could instruct you."

"And there's no need to ride the 'igh 'orse, young man," replied Snidgery coolly. "Scripture and me knew one another before you was born or thought of, and it ain't likely we are going to fall out now. But that's neither here nor there; the question is, have you got anything in view?"

Anthony shook his head, and turned to Agatha with a questioning glance as she stealthily pulled his sleeve and bent toward him until her great swathes of careless hair mingled with his.

"Don't bind yourself," she whispered.

"What do you mean?" he asked in the same tone.

"Do not promise to do anything that you cannot throw up on the instant, and come with me. Anthony, if you do, I will kill you!" Suddenly her whisper became low and tender in one of her rapid transitions of mood, so that he could hardly catch the words. "I want you to be with me, Anthony, when I start again; as you were before—always, my husband. Though I have ill-used you, and other men—" Something made her raise her eyes to his face, and the passion fled from them; with a mirthless laugh she pushed him roughly away and leaned back in her former posture.

"What's the secret, Aggie?" asked Snidgery.

"If I had intended you to know, I should have spoken out loud," she answered. "Mind your own affairs, Mr. Snidgery."

"Very well, then," he said, dismissing her petulance with a grin, "let's get to the point. I'm willing to give Smith a start down at my

own place,—though it's a fact I don't want nobody, and would sooner be without him—and to keep him on until he can get something better. I've been thinking it over this morning, as I was tolerable sure that you'd all be up a tree, and at present I can't hit upon no better plan."

"It's very kind of you, Josh," said Scripture rather timidly, for he had a prescience that Anthony's silence did not proceed from overwhelming enthusiasm.

"Oh no, it ain't," retorted Snidgery, who, if he were conscious of the same possibility, permitted it to move him not at all. "He'll earn his money honestly enough, and there'll be no favours on either side. He can keep my books and such: he won't find himself overworked, for the business is small and straightforward; and at the end of the week he shall receive somethink to keep himself and Aggie from the House. If he don't like it, he can leave it, so what's the verdict, Smith?"

"Acceptance, of course, and my thanks along with it, Mr. Snidgery," replied Anthony gravely. To be clerk, handyman, general factotum, to a petty usurer and lodging-house keeper,—such was his glorious destiny! And yet the offer, dictated by a rough kindness which his galled spirit called charity, was his only choice. The wife he could not love dependent on it to keep the feeble light burning behind her sullen eyes, the old man hanging timorously upon his decision and joyfully saluting him when he had spoken, as though he were an emperor back from conquest,—these controlled his voice and attuned it to complaisance. He had passed beyond the young man's restiveness at broken hopes, but he was still too young for the resignation that time flings like a mantle over the disillusion of life; he battled in the middle channel

where the water is grey and the winds wail to one burden—"It might have been!"

"About the pay," resumed Snidgery after an interval in which he occupied himself with the stump of a pencil applied to his lips and the back of a book alternately, "about the pay we won't quarrel. How'd thirty-five shillings a week suit,—or say two pound, if you like?"

"Don't ruin yourself, for gracious sake!" said Agatha.

"Not likely," replied Snidgery in perfect good faith. "What would Scripture do if I went through the Courts and there was no one to look after him?"

"I should fare very badly, my dear," said Scripture to his daughter. "I know you are only joking, Aggie, but there are some forms of fun which are poorer than downright baseness, my dear, and they should be shunned, for none toucheth pitch without defilement."

"Ah, that's right enough," said Snidgery. "What do you say, Smith?"

Anthony started from a reverie. "The same," he answered at random.

"What d'yer mean by that?" enquired Snidgery peevishly. "Some people have got as much idea of a contract as a cow has, it seems to me. Will you accept my tender, or won't you?"

"I accept it thankfully; I have said so."

"Very well; and as that's settled, I'll be off," said Snidgery, rising. "Are you coming back with me?"

No; it was better that he should remain with his wife in their cramped quarters on the wharf. To leave her to the sole care of her father, night by night with the river flowing near and the silence and darkness around her, would be criminal. He had seen no cause for the rising of a terrible

apprehension in his brain, but it was there, and he dared not disregard it. He must sleep at Rosebank Wharf.

"Night then, all of you," said Snidgery. "To-morrow morning, Smith, but not too early, we'll put your nose to the grindstone."

CHAPTER VI.

THEN began Anthony's struggle to provide that for which petitions are put up so often in the mere repetition of a form, and with as little appreciation of the significance of the words as if they were a shibboleth of some forgotten sect. He began the struggle for his daily bread, the combat with an enemy no less relentless and infinitely more grim than death, whose generic term is poverty. And as, to those in whom sensibility has not been crushed by despair or brutalised by the sordid struggle, there come intervals of detachment when one steps aside and wonders dumbly why many things are, so amid the sterile round of effort he would drop his pen at times with a sudden fierce determination to let it lie. He seemed to move under a mist, heavy, grey, and impalpable, beyond whose confines, of Little Joseph Street at one end and Rosebank Wharf at the other, he could never again adventure. Under the mist moved shadows with little semblance to human beings who came and went with dreary persistence. They lived and he spoke and dealt with them; but they were no part of his life, only, in some complex fashion, a part of his nerves, jarring upon them and setting them to work in the struggle. He was not an emotional man in the hysterical style which becomes fashionable at recurrent intervals in all educated communities; but the aftermath of a boyhood's crude romanticism,

whence sprung the great mistake of his life, remained ineradicated. And thus, at night in the close bedroom on the wharf, when his wife lay in dream-haunted sleep, all the ignoble details of the day's work would come back to him in grim assurance of a long succession of such days stretching away into an aimless future, and he would sometimes rise stealthily and twist back his razor-blade, pondering if one sweep of the clean steel would be sufficient. But those moods were rare and transitory; he had sufficient manliness not to take them, even at his worst, more seriously than as theoretical speculations upon forbidden hypotheses. Still the weeks went by and nothing changed, save for the worse.

In his own vulgar and unsympathetic fashion Josh Snidgery was not an unpleasant taskmaster. He neither expected impossibilities nor failed to acknowledge that charity was not in his line, and that Anthony was worth his wages. Moreover, though his calling was neither noble nor picturesque, it left the conscience unruffled, however it might affect the taste, for Josh carefully shunned risky transactions; he had a wholesome respect for the law, and was always careful to keep on the sheltered side thereof. His practice, as he was pleased to denominate it, had been worked up entirely by himself, and, once satisfactorily started, required no elaborate machinery to keep going. There were no advertisements, no touting, no insidious hospitality, not even a card in the window hinting at temporary accommodation upon favourable terms. He cherished no Napoleonic dreams. His clients were almost as regular as the wives of a lower class of borrowers are at the pawnshop; with these, and chance customers

whom he knew at least by repute, his traffic ceased. He was a wise and happy man, for his cautious cunning, by circumscribing his area to the attainable and keeping him clear of all legal entanglements, supplied him with the master-secret of content.

Thus, in so far as he escaped the notoriety of a more exalted sphere of usury, Anthony might have returned thanks that his lot was no worse rather than rebelled against the fate which made it no better; but there are few who can compass that refinement of pious abnegation. Man is an aspiring animal,—or discontented as some would say, which is after all but to adopt an alternative phrase—an animal with a wide proclivity for grumbling under the most favourable circumstances; and Anthony, even if he was exempt from the weakness of grumbling aloud, shared sufficiently in the usual equipment of original sin to waste a portion of his leisure in bitter reflections upon his destiny. There were other considerations, also, that pressed upon him like a weight, slowly hardening the sweeter faculties, as trouble will, and leaving but utilitarian faculties unimpaired. All his spare money, if such an adjective could be applied to any fraction of his exiguous income, went to pay the doctor; the doctor who gave Agatha medicine with an air of giving a child a toy,—something to stop its crying for the moment; the doctor who prescribed absolute quiet, good food, mental relaxation; the doctor who shook his head and gave no hope. For she grew worse, perceptibly even to Anthony, who watched her so kindly and patiently, and marked the evil growing, though he saw her every day. The fits of brooding grew longer and more frequent; the passionate outbursts of temper, in which she grew ugly and unrestrained as a fury,

though they were intermittent waxed with repetition. They frightened her father and aged him as many years had failed to do. Yet, in other respects, after the first shock when her husband had brought her home, the old man's habitual mood of abstraction saved him from much, blinding him to what others saw, and deceiving him into taking the harsh rebuffs with which she sometimes met his attempts to distract her as mere ebullitions of that waywardness he remembered from her babyhood. It was pitiable to mark the puzzled, pained expression on his smooth old face when she cried at him to leave her in peace upon her favourite seat by the water's edge, or broke in upon a reading from some classic favourite, which (Heaven help him!) he thought the surest anodyne upon this troubled earth, to scream and rail at him, at her fate, at everything and everybody.

These things Anthony had to bear with, and to hide in silence, even from her father, who might have been his helpful confidant, but was instead a loving old man from whose blindness it would have been the act of a coward to tear the scales. Time would do that, inevitably enough, in its own appointed circle. On one side indeed, and on one only, were his anxieties lightened. Her fascination for the river, and her habit of watching its restless flow, appeared to suggest nothing of what he had dreaded. She never hinted at self-destruction, or gave him reason to suspect that it was numbered among her diseased fancies. Yet, though the imminent apprehension of impending danger was no longer present, when his day's work ended and he passed under the tunnel on to the wharf, he never lost remembrance of the fear that had seized him when he first saw her with her feet swinging over the ripples and the rays of sunset

slanting across her bowed head. At those times she was quietest, so that he had got into the custom of bearing her company there, very often in absolute silence, until the stars twinkled in a dome of indigo, and Scripture Soffit piped from the door that supper was ready. Thus the Spring came, and smiled as it can even in cities. And Spring gave place to Summer, shod in brass; the season of breathless waiting for mellow Autumn, when the sun stands still, smiting like a physical blow, and London pants breathless in a great vacuum where air is not, neither coolness nor relief, where the scarce rain comes like drops of lead, unrefreshing, and only a great heaviness remains.

Upon an afternoon he sat with his forehead in his hand, apparently immersed in contemplating the waste of dog's-eared blotting paper before him, for in that attitude it could not be seen that his eyes were closed. The window was open, and the sounds of movement outside crept in with a muffled hum; for the atmosphere was suffused with quivering heat, impressing upon even the most energetic that crawling is now and again an inevitable part of the scheme of things. He was oblivious of Snidgery's entrance until that gentleman ensconced himself in the wooden elbow-chair worn to a surprising degree of slipperiness by the gyrations of fidgety clients, and cut into the heaviness with his hard voice.

"You look a nice business-like sort of clurk, I give you *my word*," he observed with a dry attempt at jocularly; "going to sleep instead of keeping your eyes skinned for victims, as they call 'emselves. Well, I'm blown! What would people think of me for permitting it?"

"I was not asleep," answered Anthony, looking up; "I was thinking."

"Thinking!" retorted Snidgery scornfully. "I know how that figures out. Principal—everythink's wrong; interest—I'm part of everythink; net total—everythink's wrong with me, and I'm a poor ill-used creature."

"Well, perhaps your arithmetic is not far out; but even then, Mr. Snidgery, I do not see that it matters much to you. The—the—work does not suffer for my fits of self-pity."

Snidgery combed his red whiskers with his fingers, and glared at his clerk thoughtfully, taking as much pains to veil his scrutiny as if the object of contemplation had possessed the delicate sensibility of a brick. "To poach on old Scripture's sort of language," he remarked at last, "you've wandered out of your spear, and it's a bad thing for a man to do."

It was useless, as Anthony knew, to take offence at his employer's language or show that he felt it. Drawing a sheet of paper toward him, he punctuated his reply upon it with dots of his pen. "You think so?" he said indifferently.

"I'm sure of it. Lor' love me! What are you doing here? Do you hanker after this job?"

"No."

"No! 'Ate it, don't you? I could have told you as much as that, and more too, if I'd a mind to it. Where are your friends?"

Anthony drew a shakily elaborate scroll, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Give you the go-bye, ain't they?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Well, you've give it to them; it's the same thing, only more so."

"Pray think so, if it pleases you; but this conversation is no more businesslike than my thinking."

"I don't know so much about that," retorted Snidgery. "I'm a-driving at something, you wait and see. I'd lay five pound, if that was my heathenish

custom," he went on, still combing his whiskers as if the action inspired him, "I'd lay five pound you cut yourself off when you made that marriage. Mind! I'm free to own she was a fine-looking gal then, with a knock-me-down sort of air about her and no promise of what has turned out, and you must have been little more 'n a boy. All the same, Mr. Smith, it was a mighty cracked business, and one you'd be bound to pay for sooner or later."

"I am not inclined to discuss the question," said Anthony, throwing down his pen and looking at Snidgery with two clear lines shaping themselves between his brows. "If any other man offered to dilate upon my wife's affliction in the way you seem inclined to do, I should break his neck."

"Pooh! but not mine," replied the money-lender, entirely unabashed. "I'm a sight too old and too coarse to quarrel with, and tough as well, so far as that goes."

"You have also been her friend from birth, and mine since."

"Well, it's cost me nothink," said Snidgery; "we're quits if you don't chouse me out of my dues from them that comes here. But let's get back to where we started from. My notion's this,—if you're so bunged up with pride (as you'd call it, I calls it bosh,) as to keep away from old friends, haven't you made none since that know about you and would be willing all the same to give a shove behind? For I knows well enough, Smith, that you are throwed away here, and that you ought to be, and might be doing better."

A momentary gleam passed over Anthony's face. "No," he replied, "no; how can one make influential connections in the sole company of strolling players whose lives alternate between fighting for bread and squabbling for

precedence? I certainly came across one man, God be thanked, to whom we both owe unpayable debts; but we went away, and though I had his address, Agatha was breaking down then, and in the dawning knowledge of that all smaller things slipped my memory. I purposely avoided him, and the address I have utterly forgotten."

"Any'ow, that sounds healthy," said Snidgery; "it's something to go upon. Do you remember if he lived in London?"

"Oh yes; it was somewhere here; but he was a great traveller, and may be at the other end of the world for aught I know."

"Well lined, of course!" said Snidgery, jerking a dirty thumb toward his pocket.

"I should think so,—very."

"It ain't likely to be anybody I know."

Anthony smiled slightly at the definite tone. "I fear not," he replied. "He was a man of social position as well as means."

Snidgery grunted, but whether in approbation or contempt it was impossible to decide.

"I do not even know his clubs," proceeded Anthony, rather as if he were talking to himself; for this was one of the grooves in which his thoughts often ran. Like most persons with lack of sympathetic or helpful listeners, he had grown to avoid in general conversation the subjects which touched him nearest; but when they were dragged to the surface by germane allusions, he would follow the groove aloud as he had so often done in silence. "That is no help, therefore, and, as my memory serves me, he lives in chambers or rooms, a directory is equally useless."

"Try advertising."

"How do you mean?"

"Hagony column," explained

Snidgery. "Like I've read. *Gentle young man, in deep distress owing to need of an immediate advance of thirty pound to save his home from ruin*—and so on. That's how they generally go, ain't it? Of course, you'd mention as delicately as you could, and as briefly, on account of the outrageous rates them papers charge, that you appealed to his recollection of former friendship. That ought to fetch him."

Anthony glanced at his employer keenly, but that worthy's countenance scouted the idea of irony.

"No, I am afraid that would not do."

"Ah, pride again," said Snidgery. "Well, please yerself; I can't do more than give good advice. 'Tisn't everybody would do that gratis either. Now, look at me."

This request the philanthropic Snidgery did not intend to be taken in the literal sense as implying that he was an individual of personal charm, but merely to draw attention to the desirableness of his economic and social environment. He did not, therefore, place himself in a more picturesque pose for contemplation (which would, indeed, have been superfluous), but stuck his chin forward and harried his fiery whiskers into an extraordinary state of disarray preparatory to distributing a few pearls of worldly wisdom. "Look at me," he repeated. "I've done myself pretty well, ain't I? And how? By sticking to Number One and swallowing pride. What's the result? I've got all I want, and more too that I have no call to draw upon in the tightest seasons. This money-lending concern I've worked up entirely to my own cheek; treating all alike, friend and foe, and giving favour no more because a man comes with tears in

his eyes and grizzles of auld lang syne than I would to the man out of the street. There's no pride about me. Why, I'd lend 'arf a sovereign to my father to-morrow if the old man was alive, and make him pay interest on the nail too. What's friends sent for, I should like to know, if not to be made use of!—Hi! you're not listening."

"Intently," said Anthony, without enthusiasm, and his head in his hand again, "intently, Mr. Snidgery, I assure you. Our views coincide exactly."

"People say to me, 'What do you live in?' 'A house,' says I. 'Why?' says they. 'To let out to lodgers, and make a bit extra,' says I. 'Why?' says they again; 'there's no necessity so to do, and you bemeaning yerself low.' 'Low be d——d,' says I. 'I must live somewhere, mustn't I? You talk of apartments and comfort, and being waited on 'and and foot as I can afford; but I've never met the apartments yet where you *are* waited on 'and and foot, and only a house remains. Well, I couldn't sleep in more 'n one room at once, nor feed in more 'n one parlour, not if I was the Czar of Prooshia, could I? Naterally not; so why should I chuck over the chance of making a bit for the opinion of people I don't care a blow about and whose talents for business is pretty well on a par with the superiority they jaw of! Not me! Look after Number One first: blow scruples; and Number One will look after you.'"

With this peroration, Mr. Snidgery, in whom the flow of eloquence necessary to describe his philosophy of life had intensified his native colloquialism rather more prominently than is the wont with practised orators, blew his nose violently to clinch the argument, and proceeded with a good appetite to tea.

Anthony gathered up his hat and

stick, and went back to his home upon the wharf through the sultry evening as drearily as if he were actually a neophyte freed from sitting at the feet of Worldly Wisdom, and pondering for the first time the words that had fallen from her hard, unsmiling lips. In detail he had caught few of Snidgery's aphorisms; but the effect remained and the harsh voice hammered unceasingly in his ears. He forgot it, and everything immaterial at the moment, when Scripture Soffit's figure, as he came round the corner, exhibited itself at the mouth of the tunnel, looking for him.

"What is it?" he cried, hurrying up breathlessly. "What is the matter?"

"There now!" exclaimed Scripture, lifting up his hands in mild reproof. "What a fellow it is, always thinking something's gone wrong! Come in, my dear, I've a pretty sight to show ye."

"When I saw you waiting—" He said no more, but coughed from the effects of his run, and a slight stain of colour, more like a smear than a natural suffusion, which had mounted to his cheek-bones, died away in his native pallor.

"Tut, tut! Anthony; you are over troubled about many things," said Scripture, stopping with his pleasant abstracted smile. "Here's a picture to scotch one of our anxieties, and the first indication that it will one day be killed, please God! Look at her, the pretty creature!"

He smiled again, and pointed, but there was no need for him to do that. From some recess of her scanty wardrobe Agatha had unearthed a robe of faded yellow brocade. In this she was draped, deftly-applied patches and powder giving the requisite completing touches; and she stood before them, among the litter and rubbish of the yard, in her favourite im-

personation (one Anthony knew well) of Miss Hardcastle. This her father regarded as indicative of convalescence! But for his heaving breast Anthony could have cried at him for a fool as he nodded from one to the other, his finger between the leaves of a book.

"She used to go on so when she was a little child," he whispered as he opened at the page. "Sure, it's an innocent pleasure, Anthony, eh, and a good sign for her to go back to the old ways instead of moping in silence? I encouraged her. Now Aggie (I'm taking Young Marlow, Anthony,) I've got the place: '—My respectful assiduities atone for the levity of my past conduct.' That's your cue, Aggie."

She made Anthony a deep curtsy, sweeping her flounces out and bestowing upon him the simpering glance that a house full from pit to gallery was supposed to intercept. "Sir, I must entreat you'll desist. As our acquaintance began, so let it end, in indifference. I might have given an hour or two to levity; but seriously, Mr. Marlow, do you think I could ever submit to a connexion where I must appear mercenary, and you imprudent?" And so on to the end of the scene, her father reading the other parts and admiringly permitting her full opportunity of spreading out with gesture and pose the speeches allotted to her rôle. Anthony would have left them in sheer sickness of heart, but he dared not, for there was something of pity for the self-deceived old man to keep him, something too, in her very extravagance of mien, and a clear note rising in her voice now and then, to remind him of scenes past of which this was the travesty,—or tragedy, for tragedy in its deepest passions is the futility of fulfilled desire—and to refigure the high-strung girl of ardent beauty and flexible voice.

They sat up late that night, for she would not rest, and kept them talking ceaselessly. It was a variant of her usual mood,—feverish, vivacious, and yet more unnatural because of her theatrical dress and the stilted loquacity she adopted in consonance with it. With elaborate contrivance a second cot had been improvised for Anthony in Scripture's book-closet; and when at last they retired there, through the thin door of their narrow quarters they could still hear her pacing to and fro and acting over again to herself the scene of the evening.

CHAPTER VII.

"AND all my real property," read Mr. Chagbody, smoothing out the sheet of parchment, "including tithes and advowsons and freehold lands and houses hereinafter fully set forth. Provided always that the aforesaid—"

"Confound it, sir," almost roared Colonel Gex, "spare me the legal verbiage, and deliver it in plain English such as a plain Englishman can understand. Leave circumlocutions to those who are paid to spin them, such as your clerks. I am all pins and needles already, even with the specimen you have given me."

"As you wish, of course," conceded Mr. Chagbody drily, in a tone which plainly implied that he considered an individual incapable of appreciating the verbal niceties of his profession entitled to an equal meed of pity and contempt. "Dispensing, therefore, with legal technicalities and being as brief as is consistent with lucidity, I may explain that the will of your deceased cousin, Demetrius Albert Mudge, Esquire, Doctor of Laws, Custos Rotulorum of the County of Middlesex, and a magistrate, having to the best of his knowledge and belief, no living relative but yourself

and your issue at the time of the execution of the said will, provides—"

"Chagbody," interrupted the Colonel in a voice which made no pretence upon this occasion to be anything but a roar, and bouncing out of his chair and back again with startling suddenness, "you know me of old, and whether I am likely to stand your tricks!"

"We are no longer boys, though," replied Mr. Chagbody with a very smooth smile. "However, Colonel Gex, I am not trading upon your ignorance of our diction. If you will have patience, I will proceed."

"Come to the point then, come to the point," said the other gentleman irascibly, adding in his moustache, as a pertinent afterthought, "d—you!"

"The gist of it amounts to this: that your cousin, not, as I apprehended when he gave me, as his legal adviser, instructions for drawing up the instrument, from any particular esteem he bore you—"

"A reciprocal feeling, on my soul," interpolated the legatee with a snap, despite his anxiety to ascertain more.

"—But from a feeling, not uncommon among persons similarly situated, that the property should not go out of the family, bequeathed the whole of his estate (subject to a few specific bequests), both real and personal, to—"

"Me," said Colonel Gex, summoning all his fortitude to appear calm.

"Yes; but with reservations of some importance to which I must draw your attention. My client married, at a somewhat advanced age, a widow lady who had then living a son by her previous marriage."

"And an infernal row he kicked up in the family by doing so."

"I always understood he had no such connections, putting aside yourself," said Mr. Chagbody icily.

"Neither had he," retorted the Colonel, somewhat taken aback. "When I allude to the family, permit your punctiliousness to understand that myself is intended; and I felt it my duty to write him a tolerably strong letter upon the subject of alliances contracted by a person with one foot in the grave. Gad! he must have been of a more charitable disposition than I imagined, to swallow my observations so easily. If I'd known the old boy was going to make such a handsome exit, I should have been more cautious; but we had not been upon speaking terms for years; I believe, being always a person of extremes, that he never mentioned my name to even a member of his household, and I assumed my interests in that direction to be worth about a twopenny damn sterling."

"I have reason to suppose that to that fact you owe your present good fortune," observed Mr. Chagbody without exhibiting any tokens of gratification,—indeed, so far as his long face ever disclosed anything, his reflections just then were of a contrary tendency. "The relations existing between you at that date, and for a protracted anterior period,—at least so he has informed me—were of a character which induced him to burn the letter without opening it."

"Oh Lord, oh Lord!" cried Colonel Gex, slapping his leg in ecstasy. "Look what cantankerousness will bring a man to!"

Mr. Chagbody made a bow, which began and ended at his neck, in recognition of this moral reflection, and proceeded: "I am slightly exceeding the actual exposition of my deceased client's testament to make its bearings more clear, as we have not met, I think I may say, since early manhood, and I am consequently unaware if you

are advised as to how the late Mr. Mudge's affairs stood."

"My loss," said the legate, waving his hand, "my loss entirely."

Mr. Chagbody made another bow which might have expressed, had he been guilty of the professional indecorum of quoting proverbs, "One man's loss is another man's gain," and went on: "The lady in question predeceased her husband, without bearing him children, but leaving her own child alive, by this time arrived at adolescence. I have reason to believe that between this youth and my late client there was no inconsiderable degree of affection at one time; but differences arose, as to the actual cause of which I am unable to speak definitely, but which were possibly attributable to a divergence of views natural to their respective ages and dispositions. However that may be, continual scenes of disagreement and occurrences productive of bitterness culminated in final rupture. The young man,—whom I had not the—um—ah—felicity of meeting more than once—committed some filial crime or misdemeanour, I believe, and, instead of professing penitence, defied my client to his face; at the same time leaving the house with the declaration that he would rot rather than appeal to him for a single future benefit. Mr. Mudge, on his side, closed the door upon him, and swore neither to leave him a farthing nor to look upon his face again,—a most ill-judged and reprehensible custom is swearing, Colonel Gex, having regard to the uncertainty of all human affairs."

"Oh, cursedly!" responded the Colonel. "Well, sir, what next?"

"As a matter of fact, he never did see him again in the flesh; though let us hope," said Mr. Chagbody piously, "that he has now done so in the spirit; for his step-son never reap-

peared, and there is strong reason for assuming his demise. Nevertheless, my client did ultimately alter his mind as to his testamentary dispositions, and thereby made this somewhat lengthy preamble necessary. The entire properties you are to hold in effect upon trust—"

Colonel Gex's jaw fell at least two inches, and his nose seemed to become pinched simultaneously. "What do you mean?" he asked.

Mr. Chagbody leaned back and placed the tips of his fingers together. He appeared to be taking his time, like a child who has some surprise to disclose and parts with it lingeringly. "To hold upon trust *only*," he proceeded, "for two years, during which you have the full benefit of all rents, interest upon investments, and so on, but may not touch capital, mortgage property, or sell advowson. At the expiration thereof," said Mr. Chagbody grudgingly, "everything is yours, unreservedly. Till then, practically, nothing is; for should the step-son reappear and substantiate his claim to exist, by proofs satisfactory in the eye of the law, the property reverts to him, and you are benefited only to the extent of a life-annuity of five hundred pounds. With the effluxion of the two years, his interest lapses beyond redemption by any process within my knowledge. You are free, of course, to exercise your private generosity, if you think fit; but that is a question outside my province. The will was drawn in accordance with my instructions as I have explained, and I am not prepared to name a tribunal who would upset it. I congratulate you, Colonel Gex," wound up Mr. Chagbody, though whether upon the Colonel's good fortune or his relative's skilful lawyer remained uncertain.

A variety of conflicting emotions agitated the Colonel's mind. To

enquire too particularly therein would be bad taste, seeing that a gentleman has a right to his private feelings upon all occasions; and it might possibly be unedifying, seeing that dead men's gold has the peculiarity of sowing a richer crop of envy, hatred, malice and uncharitableness in the human bosom than all the other coinages of that metal combined. Mr. Chagbody, however, with a maladroitness ill-befitting a man of affairs, took upon himself to begin a leading observation. "The missing heir—"

"Eh?" said Colonel Gex with surprising emphasis.

"As we may call him without impropriety, though the designation sounds melodramatic—"

"And is also erroneous, without doubt. I'll wager he's as dead as mutton."

Mr. Chagbody folded the will into convenient compass for rasping his heavy jaw, and scraped himself methodically. The result was not musical, and if it was intended to irritate, certainly effected its object.

"Dead as mutton," repeated Colonel Gex; "I'll go bail to any amount he is."

"We have no evidence to that effect, any more than we have to the contrary," said Mr. Chagbody. "I was about to remark that though you are under no obligation to seek him or institute a search for his whereabouts, should any intelligence thereof come to your knowledge, its suppression would involve you in grave consequences,—would constitute, in fact, an indictable dereliction. You will pardon the reminder, Colonel Gex, emanating as it does from a consciousness that the layman's knowledge of our laws is often vague."

"But, confound it, sir, I know the code of a man of honour!" said Colonel Gex with slightly unnecessary heat.

"Oh, undoubtedly, no one better. Now, are there any details I can explain more fully?"

Colonel Gex, assuming a concentrated air of severity as appropriate to his position, proceeded to put them, making up in portentousness of demeanour for what he lacked in penetration, and noting down the answers upon a sheet of paper.

Mr. Chagbody's supplementary information was conveyed in his habitual manner of slightly laboured intonation which many persons, until they knew him better or became acquainted with his history, mistook for affectation. In a sense it was so, for it was no natural growth but had been acquired toilsomely, as some men acquire virtue, so that the once indispensable obligation of watching himself had remained behind when the necessity for its exercise no longer existed. For the lawyer was a self-made man.

He was of a grey or neutral tint all over. His frock-coat and trousers were grey, so were his spats, and all very well cut and respectable; and one could imagine grey gloves upon his large hands at such times as convention demanded gloves. His close-clipped whiskers were decorous, and grey: his hair was fast becoming so; and his eyes, if they indicated a leaning to any colour (which was difficult to determine, for they were small and deeply-sunken,) favoured the same colour. Even his long face was of a sort of leaden hue,—as nearly grey, that is, as the legal countenance can attain to without outraging propriety by emulating a clown whose paint needs washing. It may all have been coincidence; but it was keenly reminiscent of earlier days when he was worming his way upward, and a positive declaration of any sort, even as to preference for a particular section of the spectrum, would have been presumption. He

had begun low; but how true it is that life is made up of little things! A copying-clerk with ambition has hopes of articles, daring thoughts as to a managing clerkship, delirious dreams of partnership. Let us assume that, as Mr. Chagbody was, he is astute as well as aspiring. Like that practitioner, he turns his attention to little things, warming his employer's slippers, airing his employer's newspaper, calling his employer's cab unbidden, remembering his employer's pet foibles, and the like. It has been done, with signal success, both before and since Mr. Chagbody's time. By these legitimate means Mr. Chagbody rose, as has been observed in a more abstract and therefore negligible connection, on stepping-stones of his dead self to higher destinies. He grasped the elusive phantom of eminence (again in the concrete sense) and now he was the oldest, and, in all but name, the senior partner of an unimpeachable firm of solicitors within the confines of the County of London, and that egregious phenomenon, a self-made man. It is to be presumed he was happy, though such men very seldom are; but at any rate he displayed no marked predilection for referring to the depths whence he had mounted. He had usurped sundry qualities to assist in constructing himself, and had of necessity been compelled to abandon sundry others, less useful but infinitely more engaging. The result was a workable machine, but neither beautiful to look upon nor pleasant to handle.

"Is that all?" he enquired when Colonel Gex, whose presence seemed to imbue him with a mingling of embarrassment and cumbersome dignity, had come to a full stop.

"Yes." The affirmative wanted conviction. "Ye-es, I think so. By the way, Chagbody, you seem to have

screwed yourself into a mighty snug hole here," added the Colonel, finding time now that his own affairs were fixed and the shadow of the missing heir loomed less with each succeeding minute, to look around him and disinter old memories. "A good business, eh?"

"Most ancient and respectable," replied Mr. Chagbody with heavy emphasis. He might have been speaking of something tangible which weighed upon his shoulders.

"And do you own the whole doocid show?" enquired Colonel Gex, with that airy profanity characteristic of the military butterfly when dealing with solemn civil affairs. Out of the corner of one glistening eye he ogled the folded oblong of parchment. The phantom had shrunk into nothingness.

"There is a senior partner."

"Gad! he must be a regular what-you-may-call 'em—biblical chap who was so devilish ancient, you know."

"A representative," said Mr. Chagbody, "I may say the last representative, of the family which has occupied these offices with credit to themselves and satisfaction to their clients, for—" figuratively, and as implying weight without grandeur, his manner became positively elephantine—"for many generations: Mr. Lancelot Memory."

"I should like to know him. Do you think he would object?"

"On the contrary," said Mr. Chagbody, ringing a hand-bell at his elbow.

In the interval between the despatch of a messenger conveying the necessary request couched in the necessary terms of compliment, and the senior partner's appearance, Colonel Gex occupied himself with observation. He had only been in a lawyer's sanctum upon one previous occasion, the instigating cause thereof being a possible composition with creditors, not, as will be admitted,

a juncture favourable for the cool survey of surrounding objects. Now, however, he was under that benign influence which can find good in everything. The phantom was laid for ever, so far as he was concerned, and a deep magnanimity filled him to overflowing. The well-ordered appointments of the room,—its racks for papers, its pigeon-holes for wills, its easy (without being sensual) chairs for legatees—secured his entire approbation. The timely sun striking through the window and making a splash of radiance upon a lucky square of oilcloth, was a remarkable coincidence, symbolising (and here he felt he was growing poetical) the golden resuscitation of his lately chequered fortune. The regularity and precision of the rows of tin boxes mounting half-way to the ceiling, and by their mystic legends suggesting infinite possibilities, while betraying nothing, of the important transactions signed, sealed and delivered within, made him almost regret not having followed the law himself. About the centre of the pile was a box labelled *Mudge Estate*. As Colonel Gex gazed upon it, he became surcharged with a sort of rapture, and stuck his single eyeglass in position to disguise his emotion.

"Hem! Colonel Gex—Mr. Memory, who considers himself distinguished by your expressed desire of making his acquaintance."

"Distinguished—desire—acquaintance," murmured Mr. Memory, as if he were struck with the phrase and approved of it.

"Mutual, my dear sir," responded the Colonel with effusion. For a moment, it must be confessed, he felt himself imposed upon. He had expected an apparition of fearful antiquity, who would hobble into the room upon crutches, or at least carry one hand in the small of his back,

to localise the peculiar complaint from whose pangs Colonel Gex's experience of aged lawyers (gleaned from the stalls of theatres) had assured him they all suffered. Into the ear of this ancient he had proposed to bawl concerned enquiries as to how the gout was getting on with other general questions, and so give expression to the infinite loving-kindness toward all mankind with which his proximate affluence had temporarily induced him. And here was a fresh-coloured young man, possibly four-and-twenty years of age, with fashionable raiment and a carnation in his button-hole! It is not to be wondered that the gallant Colonel's conversational powers were not immediately adequate to the emergency, that he sat staring with his glass screwed into his eye in rather a ridiculous fashion, and that Mr. Chagbody was the first to speak.

"A relative of one of our most esteemed clients—now, alas, no more!—the conduct of whose affairs was confided to my branch of our firm, Memory. You may not have known him—Mr. Mudge?"

"Mudge—Mudge—" said Mr. Memory thoughtfully. "Can't say I do, definitely. Was it the gentleman who consulted you as to some tangle in connection with the Bigamy Laws?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Memory; that was Sludge."

"Ah," said young Mr. Memory, turning to Colonel Gex, "distinguished by my desire of making your acquaintance, sir, all the same. That is—er—"

"Mutual, mutual, Mr. Memory," responded Colonel Gex again, who, now that his sense of having been trifled with began to evaporate, fancied he perceived a gentleman after his own heart in one so well got-up generally as the youthful solicitor, "mutual, I assure you. When

I am settled in the new house I propose purchasing,—which, in point of fact, I have had in my eye for some time—I shall be extremely gratified if you will call and place our acquaintance, so auspiciously begun, upon a more intimate footing. My girls will be of the same mind."

Here the Colonel began to make preparations for departure, which however, for some reason, exhibited reluctance. He bowed, Mr. Chagbody bowed, Mr. Memory murmured his delight and bowed,—but he did not go. His gaze wandered round the room, and lit again upon the tin box labelled *Mudge Estate*. Mr. Chagbody had mentioned that the deeds therein lay under his sole care. "I expect you, too, Chagbody," he said at last explosively. "Our long connection, though it has been broken of recent years, makes that invitation superfluous. Damme, you sha'n't get out of it!"

"I will make no such attempt," replied Mr. Chagbody solemnly. Good-bye. I am always at your disposal. Good-bye."

Colonel Gex took at least five minutes to descend about fifteen stairs, and when this progress had landed him on the door-step, stood about five minutes more without proceeding to the pavement. At the expiration of that period,—during which he had tugged his moustache in every direction (short of detachment from its roots) in which a moustache could be expected to go, and had also performed an astonishing variety of movements with his feet—he appeared to have conquered an internal repugnance. Fixing his glass in position—where it habitually refused to remain except under forcible compulsion, and even then for no length of time—he dashed precipitately up-stairs.

"Back again?" said Mr. Chag-

body, who was alone. "Something you have forgotten?"

"Well—ah—yes; a mere trifle."

"I am wholly at your service," said Mr. Chagbody, seeing that he had stuck.

The courtesy did not help Colonel Gex, who dived after his glass,—which had disappeared,—glued it in resolutely, and went off at a tangent. "I take it old Mudge was profitable to you, eh?"

"Well, he was of a litigious temperament," conceded Mr. Chagbody with a slow smile.

"So am I, Chagbody, confoundedly litigious. I don't intend to sever the connection. You'll make a good thing out of me."

Mr. Chagbody had sufficient virtue remaining to refrain from congratulating his client upon the prospect, and Colonel Gex stuck again.

"Is it another matter upon which you desire to consult me?" asked Mr. Chagbody.

"Well—er—no, not exactly," answered the Colonel, advancing nearer and lowering his voice to a confidential, almost indeed an affectionate whisper. "Mind you call upon me, Chagbody. We'll have more than one yarn of old times over the nuts and wine, hey?"

"Certainly, my dear Colonel, certainly."

"But it won't be necessary to discuss, within the limits of the domestic circle, old Mudge's will?"

"I should consider it a violation of professional confidence to do so," replied Mr. Chagbody.

"Ha! I thought you would, of course. Lawyers have their notions of etiquette as much as other people, hey?" said Colonel Gex, waxing jocose, and rejecting, after rapid consideration, a project that suggested itself of digging his legal adviser in the ribs.

"Indubitably," said Mr. Chagbody, ponderously ironical.

"But this young Memory, eh, your senior partner—ha! ha! good joke that!—how about him? Youthful indiscretion, you know, and all that sort of thing?"

"Mr. Mudge's affairs were my care entirely. If you noticed, he was not even cognisant of the lamented gentleman's name."

"True, I had forgotten; but," said Colonel Gex in a burst of rather unnatural expansiveness, "you see my motive? A man does not care to have it advertised all over the shop that he subsists upon the benefactions of a relative with whom he always quarrelled most doocidly. Family rows are rather *infra dig.* sort of affairs."

Mr. Chagbody concurred in this laudable desire for reticence, whereat Colonel Gex made his adieux for the second time, and reached the door without misadventure.

"Wait, though!" he exclaimed, arresting himself spasmodically and plunging for his eye-glass. "There is one more thing, small enough, but which puts a man in a devilish ridiculous position. Fact is, Chagbody, I've slightly overdrawn my account at the bank; I'd almost forgotten it, on my soul. Is the estate yet in a sufficiently cleared-up condition to—eh?"

"Well, probate is not yet taken out," said Mr. Chagbody, unearthing a slim, green-covered book from a drawer, "but upon your signing a quittance I think there need be no difficulty for anything in reason. How much do you consider requisite?"

Colonel Gex considered the requisite figure, and declared the same with so little delay that it might have been in the forefront of his meditations for an hour past,—as indeed it had been, to be wholly frank. Whereat, one

tender pink leaf ravished from the green-coloured book, slips into an innermost pocket: once more he reiterates fervently the desire that Mr. Chagbody will inspect his new town-house at the earliest opportunity; and once more he takes his way down-stairs,—no longer at three steps to the minute, but with feet that hardly seemed to regard them at all, with hands scorning the banisters of suspicious stability, and a heart whose specific gravity was for the nonce so contemptuous of physics that it threatened momentarily to spring up to his throat, and choke him in an insane desire to dance.

For he treads upon air, does Colonel Gex, and he feeds already upon the ambrosial future. He is a widower, and a father of marriageable daughters; his moustache is more white than black, and the hair upon his head needs careful diurnal disposition to mask the approaches of Time. Yet does the Colonel bear himself with surprising buoyancy. The roar of Fleet Street hurtles past him, but he heeds it not; the cupboards of memory contain more than one skeleton, if not ghastly at least uninviting, but he has locked the doors thereof and thrown away the keys. His coat shows a pliant and complaisant disposition at the seams, and his trousers are strapped something tightly over his boots for prudential reasons; but he looks in the shop-windows like any schoolboy, and conjures up sartorial visions of surpassing splendour. Yes, Colonel Gex is young again, and brimming over with the delightful anticipations of youth. A crossing-sweeper importunes him (though there is about as much mud to remove as the Sahara might be expected to exhibit at noon-day) and he dives at once into his waistcoat-pocket. Beautiful generosity, born of a mind at peace with

all the world! But his fingers encounter some keys, a toothpick, and half-a-crown. Can one remunerate a crossing-sweeper with a latchkey or a toothpick? A thousand times, no; it would outrage his choicest feelings. There remains the half-crown. *Ten* thousand times, no; it will pay for a libation to Fortune, who is a fickle jade and ill-disposed to slighting. So Colonel Gex smiles his blessing, and passes on.

He passes on through Fleet Street, through the Strand, and eke through Whitehall; then he turns off and threads less historic thoroughfares with a tendency to squalor and overpopulation. Still he smiles,—he cannot help it. He pulls down his wrist-bands, and pulls up his cravat; eases his collar, and imports a revived swagger into his gait; expends a vast amount of activity in routing his eye-glass from remote coigns of his costume, where it will secrete itself,—for his beaming countenance is not favourable to adhesion, which requires a frowning guise. What do the dirt and the depression of these streets matter to him, what their droves of clamorous infants? He will soon be quit of them, installed once more, and this time irrevocably (of that he is certain) in his own especial niche of the temple of gentility. How chaste it looks through the rending veils of anticipation, how inviting, how—how devilish pleasant altogether! He can hardly suppress his emotion, and, though not congenitally addicted to musical expression, hums a tune in which sprightliness more than compensates for a lack of melody. His way lies partly through Westminster, and the street therein which is named after Little Joseph. He knows nothing of Little Joseph and cares less; and as for two persons seen in a passing glimpse through a window flung up to miti-

gate the heat (with dubious results) he knows them not from Adam. Neither do they know him. The younger, it is true, moved to raise his head from an interest-table at the unusual sound of cheerfulness, seems to grasp at something nebulous in his mind and lose it before tackling the interest-table again; and the elder, with a scornful glance at the eye-glass, grunts "Shabby genteel," before remarking, "It's time you got at least them eight per cents. by heart, Anthony." But that is all; and had they been asked as to the identity of Colonel Gex wending homewards, they would have severally replied, in the same or similar words, that they did not know him from Adam.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF all laudable examples of perseverance in the musical art there is none worthier of commendation than the common or domestic canary; he rivals the whistling street-boy and beats the music-teacher by the hour out of the field. The particular canary which has excited this observation inhabited a small cage in a small room in a small house; and, partly from original sin, partly perhaps to dissociate himself from the pervading impression of insignificance, screamed in a way which would have done credit to a very large throat indeed. A girl who was perfunctorily painting a fan at the round centre-table, paused in her occupation to throw a pencil at him; and another girl, who sat at a little distance engaged in some sewing, paused a moment to smile quietly at them both.

"You will not get on very fast, Bud," she said, "if that is the way you treat your tools."

Bud pouted a pair of the most delicious lips ever boasted by a maiden of seventeen, who has not very long (as years count) put her hair up and

let her skirts down, and is beginning to practise in dead earnest the distracting arts inherent in her sex; and by way of reply she launched a paint-brush at the canary. Even if it had hit him (which it did not, going, as a matter of fact, in an altogether contrary direction) he would have deserved it, for he had just begun a fresh attack upon an octave of incredible altitude and piercing quality.

"Or bring much more grist to poor Papa's mill," continued her elder sister, turning industriously to her sewing again.

"How can you be so silly, Alice!" cried Bud. "As if I could ever bring grist to Papa's mill, as you call it!"

"Perhaps not, my dear; but at least you can try."

"And stain my fingers, and dirty my few frocks,—for nothing; you know it's nothing, Alice. What is grist too, Alice?" said Bud perversely. "I am sure I don't know, and I don't believe you do. As if I should ever sell these trumpery things," she went on after waiting in vain for a reply. "It's ridiculous! I have not even finished one yet."

"I expect that is the reason that you have never sold any," replied Alice, wrinkling her smooth forehead in the effort of logic.

"You are a cross old stick-in-the-mud, Alice!"

"And you a school-girl still, Bud, who cannot forget her slang."

"Oh dear, how hot it is!" said Bud, stretching her arms over her head and yawning. "Bother that horrid canary! One cannot hear oneself speak for his screaming, so it does not matter if I do talk slang; and besides there is no one to listen. I wish I could go out and do things like other girls. It's a shame, and I say bother everything, and *dash* it all too—*there*!"

"You are getting tired, Bud," said

her elder sister kindly. "Lie down until tea-time and finish the painting after."

"While you go on pegging away, Alice?" said Bud. "No, you dear old martyr, I will not do that; I will stay here and encourage you with my presence."

The dear old martyr, who might have been four-and-twenty or thereabouts, stitched away methodically. Bud wandered about the room with wayward aimlessness; banging at the canary's cage (and thereby nerving him to fresh transports), pulling a face at the hideous china presentments of animals never known to naturalists which adorned the mantelpiece, and sighing tempestuously at intervals.

"Shall we have tea early?" suggested Alice, after watching her for some time without appearing to do so. "Papa will not mind if we do not wait; he does not care for tea."

"Here he is!" cried Bud, waving her hand gaily out of the window. "Hurry up, Papa, and tell us all the news!"

Papa (otherwise Colonel Gex) did not need this exhortation. He came into the room with a burst, seated himself in the only comfortable chair with a bounce, and generally acquitted himself rapturously. The ebullience of his spirits may have suffered somewhat in a long trudge over baking pavements, but only so far as to settle down into a consolidated content which his stuffy surroundings, as he gazed about triumphantly, accentuated by the recollection of their impotence to gall him much longer.

"What did Mr. Chagbody want, Papa?" said Alice. "It is no new,—new trouble, is it?"

"I don't believe it is," cried Bud before he could speak. "Lawyers are terrible people (aren't they?) with always some mischief on hand; but

I am sure this Mr. Chagbody must be an exception, Alice, for look at Papa's face,—it is shrivelled up into one big smile!"

"My children," said Colonel Gex, assuming as much solemnity as lay within him, for he was not manifestly flattered by his daughter's description, "my dubious reception of the excellent Chagbody's invitation to call upon him was more than unjustified; it was criminally faint-hearted and devilishly wrong from beginning to end. In a word, I am again a man of ease—a man of wealth."

Bud flung herself into his arms with a little scream of joy. "You darling old Papa! Oh, how delicious! But what was it—where was it—how did—how much? Oh, *do* open your mouth, Papa, and tell us everything, or I shall go off pop!"

"There, my child, that'll do," said Colonel Gex, extricating himself with all convenient despatch. "You are so impulsive that one cannot get a word in edgeways. Look at your sister; she behaves like a reasonable being."

Alice had drawn her breath in sharply at the Colonel's announcement and a clear colour had risen in her cheeks. Now her head, with its shining braids of brown hair, was bent over her work again, and it was as if she addressed the busy needle when she spoke. "Mr. Chagbody has not induced you to become director of some company, has he, Papa? When you tried that before, you know, it turned out unfortunately, and you said afterwards that calmer reflection convinced you that it was speculation, and that all speculation was wrong."

"Undoubtedly, Alice; especially so when one has a dependent family and the profits are not visible to the naked eye. I commend your prudence, my child; but this is another affair altogether. Just unwrap that parcel

I have brought back, Bud ; and you shall be enlightened fully and satisfactorily."

The parcel, on being unwrapped, disclosed a black bottle with a red seal, and explained why Colonel Gex's pocket at this moment contained no more than a toothpick and a bunch of keys. It was a comfortable bottle of allusive aspect, and diffused a sense of cool richness, when its ruby contents were poured out, infinitely soothing to dwell upon ; but he would need to be a father, or of very material nature indeed, to dwell upon it while Bud busied herself about its disposal. How the sun shone upon the yellow canary and upon her yellow hair, and how it showed which was the rarest in gloss and softness and light ! How the little hands trifled with the glasses and put to shame by the gentle tint of their nails the gross carmine of the wine ! How her blue eyes twinkled, like deep inland lakes, such as the Switzer knows, when a breeze drifts down into the bosom of a valley and stirs their pellucid depths into life ! How the innocent school-girl trick of tossing the golden head captivated where more polished arts had been vain, and led one to laugh for very sympathy ! How she flitted gaily about, where a moment before she had dragged her dainty little feet in petulance, as light and elusive as a mote in the sunbeams dancing through the narrow sash ! What were the substantive wine beside this, the figurative wine of youth and health and beauty, and of merriment dawning under prosperity as merriment should, at least in youth, despite the sages ? Who but a father—shame on him, even though he were a father !—could disregard all this, and devote himself to the cold-blooded consumption of the liquor, carrying his callousness to the extent of hold-

ing his glass to the light and muttering in one breath deprecation on the vintage and hopes of a better one when he came into his own ?

That is what he did do, however, beside going through sundry other manœuvres artfully calculated to inflame the curious female mind to madness. For how long he would have continued this exasperating course of behaviour it is impossible to say,—the Colonel being one of those perverse creatures who imagine that good news, like wine, grows better for keeping—had not Bud seized upon the bottle, and springing with it to the extreme limits of the little room, vowed that not another drop should pass his lips until he had told his story.

"Dooce take it !" he exclaimed. "Come back, Bud ! The stuff is poisonous enough already without your shaking it into mud."

"Not while you are a tantalising Papa, sir !"

Colonel Gex had almost exhausted the charms of being a tantalising papa, and was willing to compromise, but he felt something was due to parental dignity. It was not to be expected of him that he should rise, on a hot afternoon, and from the one easy chair, in pursuit of a laughing will-o'-the-wisp, so he said snappishly, "Take it from her, Alice."

"I think she has a little reason on her side, Papa," replied Alice ; "we are naturally anxious to hear your good fortune."

"When he descends to a contest of words with one of your sex, a man has to give in,—that's my experience," said Colonel Gex. It would have made him very indignant had the bare assumption been alluded to by others, but actually he deferred upon most points to his eldest daughter ; even in his most selfish and careless moments (which had been pretty

liberally scattered through his tale of years) her quiet and womanly stability of character had influenced him unconsciously more than he knew, or would have cared to admit.

"And that means *you* are going to give in," said Bud. "Now that you are a good Papa, here is your bottle,—and I am glad I am a woman."

"Still, the news is not told yet," said Alice.

"Very well, it shall be," declared Colonel Gex, polishing his eyeglass and glancing from one face to the other to watch the effect of his announcement. "Mudge is dead, God bless him! and has cut up in a devilish handsome and praiseworthy manner, leaving me, in point of fact, his sole legatee. Now, what do you think of that?" He fixed his eyeglass in position, and, as a natural consequence, scowled terrifically as well as impeded his vision.

"I think it's splendid!" cried Bud, dancing about the room, a manifestation of joy which caused her father much uneasiness.

"He was very well off, was he not?"

"He was, Alice. I should not be particularly elated at a bequest of debts or of a bare pittance."

"I mean that he owned houses and had interests which require some business-capacity to deal with," said Alice. "Do you think you have had sufficient experience to manage them carefully unaided?"

"Business-experience!" retorted Colonel Gex irritably. "No; of course I haven't, and I don't need it. What does a gentleman want with business-experience? Dooce take the girl! Haven't I talent and brains, and was I a pauper until that confounded smash-up came from trusting to the advice of a parcel of needy rogues? No,—or rather, yes *and* no."

Alice said nothing in answer to this vindication, and began to prepare the tea as usual; but in such an unusual state of mental aberration as to commit the solecism of pouring milk into the tea-pot and putting sugar in the hot water. Bud, restless and wide-eyed as a child going to its first party, clapped her hands in pure delight at finding her sister, who was always right, for once committing mistakes, and without opposition took over the direction of affairs. Thenceforward these things went more smoothly, inasmuch as they were not attended to at all; and the all-engrossing pleasure of forming plans superseded the material desires of the appetite.

Plans for the future—those castles of Spain whose battlements each architect constructs on his own plan, and can see no fault or fragility in until they tremble and fall about his ears. But what enticing erections they are, raised and moulded solely to one's sweetest specification, and how are their pinnacles informed with every grace as one sees them tapering upwards in the azure softness of futurity's haze! Perhaps it is not altogether to be regretted that they should so often fall before one takes possession of them. There are many sights that gleam fairer from the distance, and with immaterial things to materialise is often to break; and even when the traveller is one of those lucky ones who does not find his bourne recede as he advances, is he always content to find his wishes fulfilled and loiter in the enjoyment of them without disillusionment or ulterior regret? Does he come to learn that the glow from the windows he admired afar, are sunbeams thrown back by panes crusted with the cobwebs of years; that the bricks of his most aspiring tower are friable and its staircase, rotten from long disuse, will not bear his eager

feet; that the halls are empty, cold, and dismal, and echoing to ghostly voices whispering in a language he has never known? Very often he finds only this; and his consolation is to tell himself that the place is overrated, but is at least better than that whence he came.

Still, as Colonel Gex observed in prefacing the enumeration of his few modest requirements, it is astonishingly good and unexpected business to find oneself on the high road with one's best foot foremost and the signposts all pointing the same way; and this combination of circumstances (adduced to the fact of there being no listener of his own sex and standing before whom he could expand) encouraged him to abandon his usual parental reticence and come out very strong.

To begin with, he must provide himself with a new wardrobe according to the requirements of the society which he proposed readorning. That was such a trifling and natural proceeding as to require no dilation. There were other luxuries of importance which, though equally indispensable to a gentleman's household, required more profound consideration: horses, for instance, and carriages, and whether the latter should bear his coat-of-arms or only his crest; this question also applied to china, plate, and so on. Indubitably these problems could not be settled off-hand and in a frivolous spirit. His prospective cellar threw him into a gentle perspiration of ecstasy; and the question of clubs was obviously one requiring the nicest thought. These matters, as affecting himself, who was head of the family, and must accordingly be considered first, naturally struck him as most pressing; but there were others which his daughters would no doubt assist him in thinking out and perfecting.

Bud would, for one; she required

no goading into co-operation. Papa would find an active aider and abettor in her; but on the other hand he must fulfil his parental obligations. He must take her to dances, and theatres, and concerts,—yes, and to dinner-parties, but not very often, because she knew they would be rather slow. Then there would be rides in the morning, upon her mare; she would have a mare for her very own, instead of a horse, because they were more romantic, and good riders, like highwaymen she had read of, always rode mares. And papa would never invite old frumps, especially female old frumps; but only know nice people such as were amusing and clever, or such as everybody else knew. There must be a yacht too, when the sea was smooth and the weather warm; and papa should take them abroad,—and they would always travel first-class,—and she should have, oh, hundreds of frocks,—and a French maid,—and—and, oh dear, such a lot of things would Bud have and do, all of them enumerated in one breathless torrent of words tumbling pell-mell over each other, and all such as it surely needed only a glance at those dancing eyes and dimpling cheeks to think wholly reasonable and necessary.

As for Alice, it was difficult to say what she would have; for she was slow in beginning her catalogue and late in getting an opportunity, and we know that the first comer will always be first served. Moreover, just as she was about to mention her desires, or at any rate to speak, an interruption occurred which postponed their enumeration indefinitely.

The interruption in question took the form of a very loud bang upon the front door, such as might have been produced by the vigorous application of an oaken walking-stick, and an extremely hearty and full voice upraised in the passage directly afterwards.

"That's Mr. Gilstrapp," said Bud, relaxing her attitude of listening. "I knew his knock directly!"

Mr. Gilstrapp himself followed upon her vaticination with commendable promptitude, seeming to bring in with him, as it were, a breeze from some quarter unknown to that stifling neighbourhood. His blue coat with its brass buttons spread back from his ample chest, displaying a waistcoat of surpassing whiteness, and the large low collar he wore spread back from his bronzed throat.

"Well, Gex," he hailed that gentleman, who looked sparer and more correctly urban than ever beside Mr. Gilstrapp's upright burliness, "here I am again you see, like the bad ha'penny or the waggish fellow in the pantomime. How's everybody? Got through the Doldrums yet, eh? Phew! it is hot! the Line's nothing to it, and I've crossed at times when the weather might be compared to that they tell us is customary in a place whose name we don't mention before ladies."

Having delivered this opinion with great heartiness and the utmost good-humour in the world, Mr. Gilstrapp mopped his brow with a silk handkerchief and introduced himself, as it were, less generally. That is, he smote Colonel Gex lustily on the shoulder, at which the Colonel grinned with mingled pleasure and pain,—chucked Bud under the chin, which offended her mortally, and condoned his offence in no time by producing a box of delicious chocolates—and placed his broad brown hand in Alice's white one with an old-fashioned courteous bow very pleasant to see. These amenities finished, he seated himself upon the horsehair sofa, mopped his forehead again and smiled upon each in turn.

"How's the world been wagging with you since yesterday, Gex?" he

enquired, as if they had not met for at least ten years. "You look prodigious cheerful, I'm glad to see. That's right, man! There's nothing like a lively look to keep your end up in this see-saw of life—eh, Bud? You were last at school, and ought to know most about see-saws."

"My dear boy," said Colonel Gex, getting the start of Bud (who was handicapped by reason of her mouth being full of chocolates), and adopting a form of address much affected among gentlemen contiguous to their fifth decade, "My dear boy, I've some reason to look cheerful."

"Good!"

"An ex—cellent reason—"

"By Jove! Good again."

"—Which I'll tell you," said Colonel Gex.

"You shall, or I'll throttle you!" exclaimed Mr. Gilstrapp, laughing heartily at his own pleasantry, and bringing his palm down upon his knee with a resounding smack. "Stay, though — half a minute! Where's Miss Alice?"

She answered the question herself by appearing from some outside region and placing a cup of tea by his side. It was a big cup, such as he affected and as seemed most accordant with his big frame; and a strong cup, like himself and his strong direct ways; a cup, also, brimming with cream, and therein typical of the soft richness of sympathy that underlay his bluff frankness.

"Now, this is what I call the thoughtful housewife and deft hostess rolled in one!" he exclaimed, bending his head over it to her, as if it were a bowl of wine and he toasting her. Perhaps he was; there is no knowing, for even the most transparent persons can be mute upon some points, so they be not dishonourable and touch them deep enough.

"You will choke, Mr. Gilstrapp!"

"Bless you, I'll take care of myself, if only to put your talents in requisition again, Miss Alice. Choking, at my age, would mean a fit, subsequent snuffing out, and no more refreshment for me!—Now, Gex, I'm ready, and I can see you're on fire to enlighten me."

"Not at all, Walpole, if you don't wish to attend," retorted the Colonel peevishly.

"Nonsense! Out with it!"

Thus abjured, Colonel Gex embarked upon the stream of narration, floating gingerly and haltingly at first, but presently finding a fair wind and sailing onward with all canvas set. Having marshalled and passed all specific facts, he proceeded to a wider exposition of his intentions than he had even shown his daughters. Though he was not usually discursive upon his own affairs, this particular turn gratified his vanity and his peculiar instincts so strongly that he threw away all reserve for the time, and rambled on almost childishly. Mr. Walpole Gilstrapp was not, in the nature of things, able to put in more than an occasional word expressive of wonder and congratulation; and his host was not congenitally disposed to read his friends' faces very carefully. This latter fact saved him much, for it was odd to remark that Mr. Gilstrapp did not respond as he might have been expected to do. On the contrary a puzzled expression gradually revealed itself on his tanned face and seemed even to ruffle his iron-grey hair, an expression which, despite a fierce contest with his innate generosity, turned almost to regret when he looked toward Alice. Nevertheless the self-conscious Colonel enjoyed himself at such length that he was still full of resources when Alice rose and drew her sister's arm within her own.

"It is time we were in bed, Papa," she said, kissing his forehead.

"Quite right, Alice; good-night. Don't squeeze me, Bud, as if I were a lemon, for Heaven's sake!"

Bud pouted, fixed his eye-glass up, and kissed that. "I wish I could squeeze the sleepy creature who invented bed till he had no breath left," she said.

"I dare say there are one or two who would be willing to risk asphyxiation on such terms," observed Mr. Gilstrapp with his hearty laugh as she held a cheek towards him. "There's an avuncular embrace for you, Miss Airs and Graces—"

"What does avuncular mean, Mr. Gilstrapp?" enquired Bud, pulling his loose neck-cloth out of shape.

He twisted her round with one light turn of his strong wrist, so that she faced the door, holding out his other hand to Alice. "And good-night, with pleasant dreams and a full realisation, Miss Gex."

"Miss Gex!" put in the Colonel irritably. He had been thrown out by the interruption to his oratory and was consequently inclined to mark little details which would have escaped him in a more complacent mood. "Miss Gex! What the devil's this ceremonious nonsense, Walpole,—or are you trying to be funny?"

Mr. Gilstrapp reddened under his tan. "One must treat an heiress with respect, you know," he retorted lamely. The explanation was meant for two; but one had already gone after a quick look at him from her steady brown eyes.

"Yes; but not you, Walpole, who have dandled 'em both in long clothes," replied Colonel Gex, grinning with satisfaction nevertheless at his friend's ready perception of the new conditions.

"Never mind the dandling; I'm your junior, Gex, by two good years."

"Hulloa! what are you getting touchy about? Gilstrapp touchy—ho! ho! that's a good notion!"

"'Pon my soul, I believe it is!" exclaimed Mr. Gilstrapp, himself again before the fine laugh he sent rolling round the little room had half expended its reverberations. "I shall be cultivating dyspepsia next. Now I've started the canary with my row. Chuck a cloth over him, Gex, and bring out the whiskey if you've got any left; if not, I'll take the liberty of dropping round to the shop and importing some."

"There it is, on the top of the

cupboard. Alice leaves it ready for me each night, and two glasses when you come, as you may possibly have noticed."

"Here's her health, Gex, and yours, and the Flower-Bud's too! May you never deserve happiness less than you have done hitherto; and now that wealth has come for the first time to them and the second time to you, may you know how to enjoy it!"

"I mean to," remarked Colonel Gex, taking his eyeglass out to wink.

(To be continued.)

THE ROMANCE OF THE FUR-TRADE.

For centuries after the planting of the earliest European settlements in North America the fur-trade was considered by far the most important industry of the settlers, and the great profits derived from it were the main incentives to further exploration. It was in the prosecution of this trade that men first entered the vast prairies beyond the Great Lakes, ascended the two Saskatchewan and the Mississippi and Missouri, and scaling the long rampart of the Rocky Mountains descended into the undreamed-of territories of Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. The annals of these explorations are for the most part unwritten (except, indeed, in the geography-books, whose maps and lists of place-names are the only monuments to hundreds of makers of history as well as of geography), and little more can be done by the professed historian than to trace the various steps by which the old fur-traders attained their first sight of the Pacific, the least known and most romantic of the seven seas before the nineteenth century began, and possibly destined to be the world's battlefield in the twentieth. But here and there in his researches the historian finds not merely history but a story, and has not a few stray glimpses of the spacious times of those fur-trading pioneers.

Even during the French occupation of Canada hunting and trapping in the vicinity of the settlements soon ceased to be profitable; and the fur-trader, and those from whom he obtained his furs, found it necessary to travel further and further afield.

To-day in the partially-settled tracts of the North-West it is noticed that even a small amount of traffic (to say nothing of actual settlement) will cause a strikingly rapid diminution in the amount of game there. Experienced hunters and trappers will tell you that a mere haying-trail or saddle-path, or even a cattle-track (for next to the scent of man wild beasts most loathe and dread the scent of domestic animals) will exclude moose and bear from a district as effectually as would a barbed-wire fence; and even in the case of geese, duck, and other wild-fowl the progress of settlement is invariably fatal to the hunter's chance of success. Accordingly as early as the seventeenth century the *coueurs des bois*,—men who travelled for months together into the unsettled wastes, trapping and hunting and also exchanging goods (both wet and dry) for furs with the Indians—were already a prominent class in Canada. At the beginning of the eighteenth century some of the recognised trade-routes,—routes, whose milestones were the nameless graves of such as had perished by misadventure or at the hands of hostile Indians—used by these folk already touched on the confines of the Great Plains; and it was a report brought in by one of those *coueurs des bois* of the astounding richness in game of the lands beyond the Great Lakes and of the genial character of the Indians dwelling therein which led Verandrye, son of the Sieur de Varennes, to take his memorable journey beyond the sunset. Verandrye's work of explora-

tion was carried a step further by Le Gardeur St. Pierre, who was sent by order of the Governor of New France (as Canada was then called) to search for the Western Sea. He found that sea,—but it was a sea of grass, the pasturage of a million buffalo; and it is in his report of the expedition that we first hear of the Hudson's Bay Company's operations from a French source. "The English," he writes, "annoyed at not receiving a large amount of furs at the Bay, sent collars to the Indians, forbidding them under penalty of dying to carry the furs elsewhere than to them. Not having done so, and about eight hundred of them having died from cold, the rest were all seized with fright and told one another that the Manitou had wreaked vengeance on them in answer to the prayer of the English."

It will be seen from St. Pierre's orders that one of the incentives to exploration was the desire to discover the Western Sea. Here, then, is yet another instance of that quest for a Western or North-West Passage (that is to say, a short route westward or north-westward to the wealth of the East Indies) which inspired so many great explorers from the days of Christopher Columbus to those of Sir John Franklin. And yet another instance of the same aspiration is to be found in the preamble of the famous charter granted by Charles the Second to Prince Rupert and his fellow-adventurers, that charter, which was the legal life and being of the Hudson's Bay Company. The motive assigned for the royal gift was, "That the corporators have at their own great cost and charges undertaken an expedition for Hudson's Bay for the discovery of a new passage into the South Sea, and for finding some trade for furs, minerals, and other considerable commodities, and by such,

their undertaking, have already made such discoveries as do encourage them to proceed further in pursuance of their said design, by means whereof there may probably arise very great advantage to us and our kingdom." Never was a better bargain driven; for to the Hudson's Bay Company and their servants, who ruled the Indians with such tact and patience for so many decades, the Empire owes the possession of Greater Canada.

That the French Canadian (or, at any rate, his half-brother the French Canadian half-breed) entered the high prairies before his English-speaking rival in business could be proved (if the fact were not otherwise demonstrable) from a consideration of the older North-Western place-names; most of which are French versions of the still more ancient Indian appellations. Perhaps the best case in point is that of Qu'Appelle (Who Calls?),—there is both a river and a town of that name in the North-West Territories,—which is meaningless to those who do not know the story. A certain Cree Indian was returning from the sale of his furs to one of the *coureurs des bois*. His take having included a number of fine silver fox-skins, he had returned rich beyond expectation, and had made up his mind to marry his betrothed before joining his own band. Accordingly instead of taking the direct homeward trail he turned his canoe down through the

Beautiful wooded vales of the Qu'Appelle,

travelling the shining reaches of that fair stream till the sun set and the crescent moon grew bright. Even then he plied his paddle instead of resting, for he had determined within his soul to see the face of his maiden at sunrise. But at moon-set he

stopped opposite a little poplar-bluff, and even as he turned inshore, he heard his name uttered as if from out of the bluff. "Who calls?" he cried, and a long silence followed. Then, just as he made ready to paddle on, for he had no heart to rest in that haunted shade, he heard his name called again, and this time he recognised the voice as that of his betrothed. Again he cried "Who calls?" but no answer came, and after waiting for a while he continued his journey. All that night he travelled on and at early sunrise came within sight and hearing of the lodges of his friends. They were singing the death-songs over his dead maiden; and enquiring the time and circumstances of her death he was told that she had died as the moon set, and that before dying she had uttered his name twice.

As yet the Keeper of the Archives at Ottawa has not more than half completed the Herculean task of rendering accessible to the student the vast masses of documentary evidence bearing on the history of Canada, but enough has been done to show that they teem with facts relating to the fur-traders' dealings with the Indians. It is seldom, however, that such a flower of romance is found in those piles of dusty details. Through all these bald chronicles of obscure struggles with the French and the Indians, particularly the Iroquois, who fought on their side, one sordid fact is everlastingly evident; that the real motive of the fighting was a desire for the lion's share of the profits from the fur-trade. Indeed there were times when the gathering of scalp-locks was to all intents and purposes a branch, and that not the least lucrative, of the commerce in peltries. There is one letter extant (dated in 1769) which mentions eight

scalps in a list of furs, the effects of a corporal drowned while scouting. And not only did the French and British pay a high price for Indian scalps, but in 1764 the grandson of William Penn (who had declared the person of an Indian to be sacred) offered one hundred and thirty-four dollars for the scalp of an Indian man, one hundred and thirty for that of a boy under ten, and fifty for that of a woman or girl.

Even when the struggle between French and British for the possession of Canada was finally settled on the Heights of Abraham and the Indian war-whoop, or scalp-cry, ceased to be heard in the East, men still fought over parcels of furs. The competition between the Yankee free-traders and the Canadian merchants was carried on not without blood-shed; and then there was the great war between the Hudson's Bay and North-West Companies, which began in 1815 and ended in 1821 when the two corporations were finally united. The worst outrage perpetrated in this civil war was the murder of Governor Semple of Fort Douglas on the Red River and a score of his subordinates by a gang of Indians and half-breeds in the pay of the North-West Company. Fort Douglas was armed with artillery and commanded the only water-way out of the North-West, and the Company's men were journeying past to escort their boat-loads of furs down the river, when they were met by Semple and his party, whom they massacred in spite of their leader's effort to restrain them.

There are still living hunters and trappers, and others, who remember the palmy days of the Hudson's Bay Company, when they ruled the country from the Bay to the Pacific and from the Arctic down to the International Boundary-Line. Many such are to be met with in the remote parts of

Saskatchewan and Athabasca, and with some of these I have hunted and heard talk, as the rye-whiskey went round, of the old times. And much as I prize the experiences of sport in those little-known territories, I prize even more the occasional glimpses which the rambling discourse of these men have afforded me of the spacious life of the North-West that was.

The summer running of the buffalo (as it was called) by the hunters of the Red River Settlement was perhaps the most notable event of the year during the period of the Company's utmost prosperity (from 1822 to 1860) and some description of that gigantic hunting-party will give the reader a fair idea of the romantic side of the fur-trader's life. As early as 1820 the number of ox-carts assembled for the Summer Hunt exceeded five hundred, and thirty years later there would be sometimes as many as fifteen hundred carts and waggons, and more than two thousand men, women, and children assembled at the time-honoured trysting-place on the high prairies about two days' journey from Fort Garry. A hunter's wage consisted in those days of Hudson's Bay notes to the value of £3 sterling (colloquially known as *blankets*); the women, whose duty it was to skin and cut up the carcasses of the buffalo and make them into the famous pemmican, received forty-five shillings apiece; and to each of the boys and girls who helped were paid twenty shillings. Seeing that the hunt generally lasted a full three months, nobody can say that these were too well paid for their work; especially when it is remembered that buffalo-running was an arduous and risky pursuit, and that now and again the parties were molested by Blackfeet and other hostile Indians.

Many of the hunters of the plains were also farmers in a small way, and

a start was, therefore, not possible until after seeding; for the same reason it was necessary to return before harvest-time. But as soon as the spring rains were fallen and the new grass well grown on the river-lots, they would hitch up their oxen or *shaganappies* (native ponies) and trundle off in their springless Red River carts to the rendezvous. There they would camp until all the hunters on the roll had arrived; spending their time casting bullets, cleaning their guns, mending their carts, and talking over the weather.

The last evening at home was a time of revelry, and many of the Red River settlers, who did not intend to make the hunt, would come down to the camp to help on the fun. After sundown great watch-fires would be kindled within the circle of carts, and the older hunters would sit round on their heels in the wavering firelight, exchanging tales of adventure in every nook and corner of the West, while the younger chatted with the women and girls who sat in or under the carts. Then in some sudden expectant hush,—that strange inevitable silence which sooner or later falls upon the noisiest of such gatherings—somebody would begin the beautiful old ditty of *A la Clure Fontaine*; long before the end of the first verse all the men would be singing or beating time, and when it came to the refrain,

Il y a longtemps que je t'aime,
Jamais je ne t'ouplierai,

the women's voices would soar above the men's in a sudden gush of sound, fresh and clear as the fountain of the song. Then perhaps *Lochaber No More* would be sung by the many Scotchmen and Scotch half-breeds in the gathering, and after that saddest and most haunting of all melodies a fiddle

would be pulled out of its moose-skin bag and the stirring strains of the *Red River Jig* would bring everybody to their feet. Next to a plaintive ditty the hunters of the plains loved a rollicking dance; and, having once begun, they would not stop till the sun was risen and the bonfires nothing but heaps of grey crumbling ashes.

On these occasions particular attention was paid to the moon. If her appearance was such that "a man could hang up his kettle on her horn," everybody believed there would be a month of fine weather. If not,—why, they would hope for the best.

At sunrise next morning the roll would be called, and immediately afterwards, at a meeting of the chief hunters, a leader and his staff, captains, guides, and a crier were appointed. The leader had authority over the whole party, and at the beginning and end of each day's march issued general orders through the members of his staff, who also acted as police; the captains with their men took turns at patrolling the camp and mounting guard; the guides conducted the hunters from one good camping-place to another; and the crier, who called the hunters together whenever the law of the hunt had been violated, not only proclaimed the sentence of the court but also executed it. It was the duty of the officers, one and all, to see that the camp was properly set out at night. The carts were drawn up in a close circle within which the tents were pitched in double and treble rows, the women and children sleeping in the innermost. If danger was apprehended, the oxen and horses were tethered inside the corral and the men lay with their guns loaded; otherwise the cattle were allowed to graze on the open prairie.

Long before the buffalo were sighted they could be heard by the

experienced hunter. Though at the time barely in his teens one of my informants vividly recollected how he entered the summer pasturage of the buffalo for the first time in his life. One windy morning, three weeks after they had left the Red River, his father asked him if he could hear the bulls; and when he said he could hear nothing but the wind, all the men laughed at him and his father was not very well pleased. By and by they came to a badger's hole and his father pulled him off the cart and told him to put his ear into it, and when he did so he distinctly heard a deep, far-off, rumbling sound. That happened early in the morning, but it was not until noon that a man, standing up in his stirrups, could discern what seemed to be a long streak of dun-coloured cloud resting on the high western rim of the horizon. At sunset this cloud resolved itself into two vast herds of buffalo, all moving at the same slow pace and grazing as they went. Everybody wanted to be at them, but the authorities would not hear of it; for a night alarm would sometimes cause the herds to stampede for fifty miles or more. But at ten o'clock next morning, the hunters were made to fall into line, and the crier was ordered to cry *the ho!* which was the signal for a general attack. The quaint expression "here's a ho!", which old-fashioned North-Western folk utter before gulping down the dram, or horn, of whiskey, is really a reminiscence of this ancient signal to begin the fun, and not, as some authorities say, a silly reference to the opening phrase of the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah.

The hunters used to enter on the chase with their mouths full of bullets, loading and firing from horseback and leaving the owner-

ship of the slain to be settled afterwards. When loading they poured the powder from the palm of the hand and dropped a bullet from the mouth into the muzzle of the gun; and sometimes they would fire without putting the gun up to the shoulder and in such haste that the bullet had not always time to fall down the barrel. These guns cost fifteen to twenty shillings each, and were not exactly masterpieces of the gun-maker's art; explosions were, therefore, common enough, and the sight of a hunter who lacked a thumb or a few fingers as a consequence of his hurry was not infrequent.

And so, day by day, week after week, until it was time to turn back or the buffalo had fled beyond reach, this disciplined army of hunters harried the rear of the herds, slaying hundreds between sunrise and sunset and going back on their trail at nightfall to set the camp. The work of skinning and breaking up the slaughtered animals and making the choice parts into the famous pemmican, or shredding them to be dried in the sun, fell upon the women and children, whose labours were often prolonged far into the night.

The Hudson's Bay Company, in conclusion it should be said, always did their best to prevent the indiscriminate slaughter of the wild animals upon whose welfare their own ultimately depended; and the buffalo-runners in their employ seldom killed the calves or hunted in the breeding-season. The practical extinction of the North American bison cannot, therefore, be justly attributed to the Company's policy of supplying their many northern posts with pemmican, the most nutritious and most portable of all prepared foods. The Yankee free-traders, who in 1870 had nearly a

score of factories in the Bow and Belly Rivers district, and employed a thousand Indians to hunt for them, are principally to be blamed for this result. The finer furs, which chiefly come from the far North, were out of the reach of these traders, and in order to make good profits they encouraged the Indians to hunt at all seasons, the skin of the buffalo calf which fetched a good price in the East being their favourite purchase. They generally paid the Indians in the vilest liquor, but if possible they paid them only with blows; their presence was thus a menace to the country's welfare, and one of the first pieces of work done by the newly-established North-West Mounted Police was to break up their establishments, which had become cities of refuge for all the worst villains in Montana and the Western States.

The fur-trade was never so important in the Western and Pacific States as it was in the Canadian States. One reason for this was the lack of the finer furs, which are not found so far south as a rule; and then again, after the discovery of gold in California in 1849 the quest for a gold or silver mine was the Western pioneer's only notion of a hunt. Still many of the old Wisconsin hunters were fur-traders, and much of the romance of their life was personified in Pierre Le Count, a French Canadian by birth, who lately died at Green Bay, Wisconsin, at the age of ninety-seven. This old man was probably the last of the red-shirted, buckskin-breeched, French Canadian voyageurs and trappers; but seventy odd years spent below the boundary-line had made of him a tolerably complete Yankee. One of his many friends,—for during the last ten years of his life he was regarded as a sort of state-monument and,

as such frequently visited by those interested in the antiquities of Wisconsin—sent me a sheaf of notes of his conversations, the substance of which, in so far as they concern the present subject, is here set down.

Like so many of the Western pioneers his was a green old age. It was not till the very last that he lost his health and spirits, neither was his memory dimmed, in which, as in a mirror, were reflected seventy years of life by field and flood. For some years Le Count worked for the Canadian companies, but finding that he could get a better price in the States and that there were no restrictions on the fur-trade there, he decided to transfer the scene of his operations to the territory now called Wisconsin. Fort Dearborn, where Chicago stands to-day, was then the centre of the American fur-trade. At the time when Le Count began to hunt and trap for his livelihood John Jacob Astor (the second of the name) was beginning his abortive attempt to corner the fur-trade not only of the States but also of Canada. In the first part of his task he succeeded, but in the second he failed signally; and the only memento of his scheming is the name, Astoria, of a small town in one of the Pacific States.

Le Count, when interrogated, was inclined to put his visit to New York, "to see Jake Astor" in his pride of place, as the most curious experience of his career. It appears that Astor's agent at Fort Dearborn was for ever attempting to cut prices down, and in so doing he made criticisms on Le Count's furs which hurt the old man (he was young enough then) in his weak point; that is to say, his pride as a first-rate hunter was touched. According to Astor's agent his beaver was too early (caught too soon in the autumn to have the finest natural gloss), his otter-skin was taken from a

drowned animal and had lain in the water too long, his minks were all *kits* and too small to be worth the full market-price. One year (whether in 1828 or 1829 he could not remember) happening to have money saved from the previous season's work, he made up his mind to visit Astor at New York and sell to him directly. Even if he got no more than the agent offered (so the simple-minded trapper argued) he would see not only a really big city but also a really great man. To the Western fur-traders of that day John Jacob Astor shared with Sir George Simpson the fame of being the greatest man in the world. Accordingly he travelled to Buffalo by boat, thence to Albany by four-horse stage, and from Albany by boat down the Hudson, taking with him his bundle of furs. Arrived at New York he found he did not know where Astor lived, but after many fruitless enquiries a "real nice man" took him to Astor's abode, which to Le Count's vast surprise was not a trading-place but a big smart-looking house.

What happened next is best told in the old man's own words, translated to some extent.

Not meaning to wilt after coming all that way to see Jake I climbed the steps and pulled the knocker. A man came to the door and I told him who I was and what I wanted and he said Mr. Astor was not at home. I said I was willing to wait till he came home and the man shut the door. So I sat down on the door-step and waited till near on sunset,—one, two, three hours. Then I pulled the knocker again, and the same man opened the door and seem kind of surprised to see me there still. I asked him again if Astor was at home, and he laughed like a crazy creature and said he didn't think Mr. Astor would ever come home for me. I stuck it out for another hour after he shut the door, and then the town-watch came along and I told him what I was waiting for. Then he explained some things which set me agin Astor for evermore, and I just packed up my furs and started

back for Fort Dearborn and sold my furs there, but not to Astor's man. I never dealt with Jake Astor again.

Next to this incident the most striking thing which befell the old trapper was a discovery he made in 1834. That year he was trapping along the head-waters of the Mississippi (near Lake Itaska, as it is now called,) and on the bank of a little creek he found something that puzzled him. On a little knoll, where the underbrush had been cleared away years before, was a soft maple tree, in the trunk of which was sticking the blade of a very long slender knife. The blade had been driven clean through a man's head and the skull was still pinned fast to the tree. There were a lot of bones on the ground that had been his body. Who killed that man, and why, there was no guessing. It was not done by an Indian, for the knife was a fine one, with a chased silver handle like a cross, and no Indian would have left his knife in a tree. It was driven in by some white man, and he hated the man he had killed so fiercely that he wanted him to stay there where he was fastened. And the man stayed there until the wolves, or other beasts, had gnawed his flesh off and the bones fell apart; but the

skull still stuck and rattled when the wind blew, being a trifle loose-set after all those years. Le Count sent the knife to the State of Wisconsin Historical Society in hopes that some of the members would be able to unearth its history; but they never solved the puzzle for him.

When old age drove him from active life Le Count built himself a cabin on the road leading west from Suamico about seventeen miles north of Green Bay. It stands in a dense grove of pines and hardwood timber, screened from the northerly gales by the pine-forest, while to the south the spires of the little city that was his birth-place (it was called *La Baye* then) show beyond the shining waters. In this cabin he died, as he had lived, alone. One afternoon a neighbour living a mile or so away went to the hut to see if the old man needed anything. The trapper was sitting in his big chair, his long-barrelled muzzle-loader across his knees, and his dog at his feet. Both were silent and motionless, but the dog was asleep and his master dead. Even so, peacefully and dreaming it may be of some hunting-exploit far away in space and time, died one of the last,—perhaps the last of all—of the French Canadian Voyageurs.

E. B. OSBORN.

A CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY.

SUNSETS we have all seen often and enjoyed, but of sunrises how few! One can scarcely believe that every day of our life has offered us such a chance of beauty and that we have mostly turned our backs on all, our backs and our shoulders and our heavy heads, as the poet has it. And it is not only beauty that we have lost, but that proud consciousness which early rising shares with scholarship, the possession of which enables us to look down on those less gifted than ourselves.

Among those who prefer beauty to bed I do not include mountaineers. It is part of their profession to get up early, and Alpine guides have much to tell of their reluctance to turn out of their warm quarters and to get into boots and gaiters, a reluctance only slightly modified by the fumes of early coffee. Yet not a few of these heroes would, if they spoke honestly, admit that the cream of many an expedition was just that one half hour of glory when the dead pallor of dawn gives way to a purple and crimson splendour which lights up the pure white world before the sun takes possession of the scene. So far as my few memories of such times go I do not think any of the hours which follow can compare with this; one might as well go back contentedly to one's bed, satisfied to have seen the best sight of all.

I do not myself claim to be better than my neighbours or to have seen more sunrises than they. But one dawn among a few will remain in my memory as a possession for ever, when after toiling half the night over snow,

and climbing painfully over blocks of lava lying on thin ice, we stood on the summit of Etna before the break of day. The huge open crater gaped at our feet and within it lay ridges of snow, while lower still fiery patches of embers glowed in the dark shadow, wherever it was not interrupted by dense clouds of rolling smoke. As the sun leaped up the strange shadow of the mountain, the phenomenon which all who go up Etna hope to see, started from our feet, spreading gradually its perfect deep blue cone over the broad sides of the mountain and flowing on over the island; a deep blue triangle with a more delicate outline at its side, a penumbra of fainter blue, making the whole like a pyramid seen in perspective. Beyond and around the landscape was flooded with sunshine, and Sicily, with its hills and plains of corn and wine and oil and its wrinkled sea-coast, lay like a map before us.

Here is another, a more recent experience of a dawn which owes nothing to beauty of scenery or colour, but is interesting only from its history and the riddle of its origin; a sombre prosaic dawn in the Midlands which are always too snug and comfortable to be heroic, most of all in November after the glory of the summer has departed. On last Martinmas Day, the 11th of November, while it was still dark I drove along the Warwickshire lanes into the great high road from London to Holyhead, to a little hillock, overlooking the towers of Coventry, where every year before the sun rises on this day a curious old ceremony takes place.

It was a heavy dark night and rain fell now and then. Only the parted lips of clouds in the east showed a few dull streaks of yellow light which scarcely increased even when the daylight came on. We drove in the awed silence of that last darkest hour before dawn between the great fir-trees planted long ago by John Duke of Montagu. A few labourers on their way to work greeted us curtly as they passed; a few silent wheels outstripped us. We passed a handful of cottages all silent and all dark, and presently became aware of a little growing crowd of still folk as we came near the ancient barrow now called Knightlow Hill, originally Cnuchtelowe, the Grave of the Knight.

On the top of this hillock are the remains of an old stone cross; just the base and a mere socket resting on the base. The cross probably once stood in a village somewhere near, but this is conjecture; there is no record of such a cross nor of the moving of a cross; mystery hangs over each and every detail of this curious rite.

The quiet little crowd increased and formed round the old cross on the top of the knight's grave. A few irreverent remarks about the inevitable "Krooger" were made: a little black and white kitten was seized and offered up as the first sacrifice; and then appeared the Duke of Buccleuch's agent with a paper in his hand from which, standing by the cross with his face to the east, he read the summons to the several representatives of certain villages in the neighbourhood to come forward and pay the wroth-money due to the lord of the manor, or in default thereof to be fined thirty shillings and a white bull with red nose and red ears. About twenty-five villages are summoned, some paying only a penny, others more, rising in the case of one only to two shillings

and threepence halfpenny. As each village and its contribution was named the representative came forward and dropped his coin into the basin formed by the socket of the cross. When this was over we loyally sang the National Anthem and the assembly betook itself to a neighbouring inn where the Duke, having received nine and threepence in wroth-money, provides his lieges with an excellent breakfast and offers rum and milk to any who choose to ask for it.

Not long ago one of the tributary villages, having a bull which answered the description of the forfeit, refused to pay the money and brought the bull instead. This was told me by an old woman who lived in the cottage near. The Duke of course returned the bull.

Formerly the ceremony was more impressive for, according to Dr. Thomas, "The party paying had to go thrice about the cross and say 'The wroth-money' and lay it in the hole of the said cross." Dr. Thomas published the second edition of Dugdale's *ANTIQUITIES OF WARWICKSHIRE* in 1730; but Dugdale himself says nothing of the custom in his first edition which came out in 1656. The Reverend Walter Wait (to whose *RUGBY PAST AND PRESENT* I owe almost all these historical facts) thinks there may have been a peculiar breed of cattle in these parts which were white with red or brown ears and noses.

But what was the payment made for? What is the meaning of this word *wroth* or *wrath*? No one now knows. A few years ago the Duke of Buccleuch, consulting some antiquaries as to the meaning of the word, was told it was a corruption of the Saxon *weorth* signifying either field or price. Dr. Thomas calls the money paid *rent*, but a penny is very little to pay for rent though no doubt, like

the classical dollar, a penny went much further in those days. The manor originally belonged to the crown and was granted by Charles the First with all its rights, including the wroth-money, to Sir Francis Leigh from whom it descended to the Duke of Montagu and so to the Duke of Buccleuch. Payment was refused by some of the villages in 1685, but the Court of King's Bench upheld the lord of the manor in his full rights according to the grant made by Charles. Some time ago, perhaps at the beginning of this century, the custom fell into disuse but it was revived again and has been continued ever since. Perhaps the Duke's breakfast fell into disuse first. On one occasion when Mr. Wait was present, he found that one man had walked ten miles to pay twopence halfpenny. Some others declared that they had kept the appointment duly for half a century.

But no one knew why the money was to be paid. My first idea, I must confess, was that it must be blood-money, expiation for some terrible murder. The grave of the warrior, the presence of the cross, the awful hour of dawn and most of all the strange word *wroth* with the incantation-like procession round the cross seemed to indicate some tragedy; but on consideration all these details lost their significance. The antiquaries consulted by the Duke, though they could throw little light on the word, suggested that in the lawless times to which the custom could be traced, and in which it was lost, there might be tolls paid to the lord of the manor for the passage of cattle and perhaps for protection from robbers and marauders. This seems a very likely suggestion considering the country which skirts the great Holyhead road in this part of Warwickshire. It rises into a rough kind of forest-land along which

the great fir-avenue passes, and at Knightlow Hill trends to the east. The Fossway runs obliquely across this tract of Dunsmore scattering Strettons and Strattons and Streets in its way to Lincoln and crossing the more important Watling Street (here called the Street Road) which indeed runs like a rippling ribbon over the eastern spurs of this same Dunsmore. The many quickset hedges and hedge-row elms which skirt the fields now disguise the spurs and dimples of this slightly elevated ground, but much stubby gorse appears here and there to attest the rough character of the natural soil. Over this Dunsmore it was that the famous dun cow ranged, and there she was finally slain by the valiant Guy of Warwick. The story marks the pastoral character of the ground. At first, the legend runs, this huge cow, who was four yards in height and six in length, supplied the neighbourhood with milk; but when a wicked witch milked her into a sieve she was so much outraged that she went mad and became the terror of the country-side. And this must be true, for are not the bones of the monster still to be seen hanging up in Warwick Castle and even on the porch of one of the Bristol churches? It is evident from this legend that Dunsmore had for a long time been a rough forest-country which afforded some pasturage for cattle.

It was at Dunchurch, the largest village of the district taking its name from the Downmoor (which is what I suppose the word means), that Sir Everard Digby and his friends awaited the success of the Gunpowder Plot, on the pretext of hunting over Dunsmore Heath (a triple form of the name). Their real object was to seize the person of the little Princess Elizabeth in case the two Princes were out of reach, the Princess, after-

wards Queen of Bohemia, being then at Coombe Abbey in the care of Lady Harrington. The country lay open from Dunchurch over Dunsmore Heath through Brandon woods to the beautiful grounds of Coombe, so that it would be easy to take possession of the Princess and declare her Queen in case anything happened to her brothers. The conspirators lodged in the old Lion Inn, which is still standing though an inn no longer, a long low black-timbered house with a projecting story; and here it was that Catesby, with the other conspirators who were waiting at Ashby St. Ledger, brought the news of the failure of the plot, when the whole band dispersed as fast as they could. When I pass that picturesque old house in Dunchurch I often wish that it could give us its story. What anxious hours those must have been, and what hurry and skurry round the old doorway when Catesby's messengers rode up with the sad news that the plot was discovered and King and Parliament were safe. I often wonder, too, what those gentlemen pretended to hunt; it must have been sad work while their hearts were heavy and their hopes fading. Did they hunt with mettled hound or managed hawk? Were there deer on Dunsmore Heath? One was shot, as we know, in Charlecote Park not long before. Perhaps the conspirators were cheered by venison, such as their soul loved, which may have eked out the scanty larder of the Lion Inn. Only badgers and hares and foxes are found now on Dunsmore. Warwickshire can never have wanted foxes.

That they should have hunted, that they should have felt themselves within easy reach of Coombe, shows that the country was open and unenclosed. It may well have furnished pasture for the country people round. I have spoken of the Fossway, first a

British and then a Roman road which crosses Dunsmore. It is not easy to trace it in the south-east of the county, but the name of Stratford-on-Avon surely points out that there the road crossed the river. If that was so, there must always have been communication with the heights of Dunsmore. Now in Stratford-on-Avon, says Mr. Sidney Lee (in his book on that famous little town), "One of the chief thoroughfares has been known from time immemorial by the name of Rother Market (cattle was the staple commodity of the earliest Stratford Market) and it was doubtless there that the first market was held. Rother represents the Anglo-Saxon word *hreoðer* (cattle from the Teutonic *hrinthos* whence the modern German *rind*). The ancient word long survived in Warwickshire and was familiar to Shakespeare who employed it in *TIMON OF ATHENS* (IV. iii. 12)." Timon declares in this passage that rich men only differ from beggars in so far as they are better fed:

It is the pasture lards the rother's sides,
The want that makes him lean.

I do not know whether this is Mr. Lee's own discovery, but I find that for *rother* Collier reads *brother*; others give *beggar*, *weather*, *broad*, *breather*, which shows that they were puzzled. The Cambridge Edition, by Mr. W. G. Clarke and Mr. Aldis Wright, gives *rother*, but offers no explanation of the word, nor is it defined in the glossary of their Globe Edition. In the Eversley Edition, however, Mr. Herford interprets it by *ox*, but attempts no derivation. "It was a word with which Shakespeare was familiar, a word which long survived in Warwickshire": I cannot but think that Mr. Lee has

here supplied us with the missing key. The wroth-money was the cattle-money, whether paid for the privilege of pasturage or the protection of the herds. I think the word was not originally confined to Warwickshire; it is to be found in so many other counties. There are two Rother streams in Sussex, one by Petworth and one by Rye, and in the upper valley of the latter is Rotherfield. There is Rotherhithe opposite the London Docks, and Rotherham in Yorkshire. There is a Wrotham in Kent and another Wrotham in the north of Middlesex. There is Wordsworth's Rotha flowing through Rydal, and there are probably many more. Even Cape Wrath may have been whispering pastoral ditties about the

peaceful kine that cropped scanty but sweet grass upon its cliffs, while we have only thought of the storm-tossed waves that beat furiously at its foot. The world has grown dull and hard of hearing; there must be so many names of things and places which are lost to us that it is good to rescue one of them and bring it back to life, as Mr. Sidney Lee has done in this instance. It would be pleasant to find that our word *worth* stood in the same relation to cattle as that other word *pecuniary* stands to a flock of sheep,—a great consolation to us who live in the Midlands where nothing but milk and mutton is produced.

I. S.

THE MONTH OF MOURNING.

THE return of autumn brings the Black Month, the month of death, of those who do not come home, the season of the making of widows.

Out on the furrowed sea the wind swings in gusts and lifts the wave-tops into a mist of spray; on the beaches the tides eat into the sands with huge devouring rushes. Sometimes wreckage is flung ashore; sometimes, where the currents meet and run landwards, it is other than wreckage that is cast up, a wet shapelessness upon the beach, a horror dropping from the lip of the sea. There are great grey bays circled with cliffs of granite, and sand-hills cushioned with the dull green of salty grass; bays so wide and silent that one is lost in the largeness of their desolate curve, in the levels of sand and bent and water under the vast lowering sky. And overlooking the advancing tide there stand the watchers, infinitely small and insignificant, mere points of blackness amid the grey, waiting for that which the sea brings home. For the Black Month has its harvest, and these are its fruits.

Elsewhere, also, there are others who wait and watch. Wherever a grey cross lifts itself from a cliff beside the sea, wherever a stone face gazes sightlessly out upon the blind world below, and the water-birds, wheeling and circling, keep voice with the winds, at this season there are women who come and go, or linger through the long hours, kneeling on the stone steps in pitiful helplessness of waiting. There are flowers, perhaps, about the foot of the cross, the pale autumn bloom from

windy gardens, the purple scabious from the dunes, which is the Flower of Tears. For it is said that once a poor widow of the Brittany coast went out with her neighbours on the Eve of All Souls, to deck her husband's grave,—her husband, whom the sea had only given back to her to bury; and she wept, for the others brought with them flowers and wreaths and she had nothing but her love and her tears. And as she wept, wherever her tears fell there sprang up little mauve blossoms, small, pale, sad, the purple scabious, the Flower of Tears, which grows best, it is said, where the sea makes most widows. And there is the tinkle of chaplets passing between restless fingers; a prayer, ceaseless, monotonous, that mingles with the voice of the water and the singing of the winds, and the long dumb trouble of straining eyes. For it is the Black Month, the month of mourning, and out yonder the sea is scarred with crossing paths, and ploughed by home-coming boats, and secret with the dim vessels, the soundless feet, that in all the to-morrows shall not come home.

There is not much speech among the watchers; black-clothed and white-capped, like huge sea-birds alighted, they cluster about the foot of the cross, looking, not at each other, but westward into the mist of waters. There is nothing to be seen in each others' faces but what they know is in their own; there is no word to be said that can hold the outcry of their speechlessness. There is only the habitual, mechanical consolation of

the *Hail, Mary!* the endless murmur that scarcely rouses itself to prayer and yet is comfort. Sometimes the priest comes and stands by them a little while in the wise silence that understanding has taught him; it will be time for him to speak by and by, when the terror of suspense has sharpened into certainty. And sometimes there comes one who has known in her day the anguish of waiting, but now has none left for whom to wait, and who turns her dim vision on those about her with the cold regret of age and slackened blood. But always the straining, burning, furiously patient eyes peer westward through the mist of waters, and the restless fingers incessantly roll the tinkling chaplet, *Hail, Mary, full of grace!* for the sea is secret and the way of the winds unsure, and the Black Month has come round again, the season of the homeward boats and the making of widows, the Month of the Dead.

And this is the Day of the Dead. The clouds hang low in the sky; pale, tufted, immovable, the trees stand on the slope of the cliffs bent to meet the winds that do not blow. Now and then a leaf falls with a jarring rustle athwart the stillness, and settles lightly on the ground like a bird alighting. The sea heaves smoothly in its bed, lifting a large grey shoulder that is round and unrippled; the winds are silent in their quarters, and the upper air is empty. There are no birds to be heard anywhere. There is in all the poisoning stillness no sound but the tread of feet that come and go upon the path that climbs down from the inset village to the sea, that borders in its passing the little grey cemetery where so many have not come home to lie. There is no need of much room there; there is space, and to spare, outside. And presently there is a sound of singing that comes near, a grave, sweet

chanting that is small in the large environment of sky and sea and air; there is a huddle of black and white upon the stretching beach, the shining of tapers, of swinging censers, of up-lifted crucifix, and between the little burying-ground and the wide grey sea there is a kneeling crowd that prays for those that lie in each.

The night gathers early into an intolerable blackness; the wind stirs with a distant whispering, and the air is wet and thick without rain. There is no moon, no babble of water breaking on the shore, no star answering star from sky and sea; there is no sound of life in all the village, only a close unbroken blackness set interminably between earth and heaven. The people within the houses have shut themselves fearfully, and with prayers, into their great enclosed beds: the evening meal has been eaten in silence, the fires covered and the lights put out; but the platters are not set away nor the food cleared from the tables. All is left for those that will enter presently by the door which to-night stands open from dusk to dawn; when in the midst of darkness and at the unspeakable hour there comes the sound of feet, which are not feet, upon the causeway, and the touch of hands, which are not hands, upon the latch; when those that wake and pray and listen will hear about them the voices that chant the Song of the Dead. And this is what they sing.

The night comes up weeping from the East, and her cheeks are wet and dark; her shut eyes weep and her breath sobs between her lips; the blackness of the night is very black.

It is the night when the Dead walk, and there is no light anywhere.

The Dead have burst their tombs and have come out from them like breath from between the lips; they have come without sound, without shape, they are but a blackness within the blackness of the night.

A blackness within the blackness are the Dead; cover over the ashes on the hearth lest a flame burst forth from them; cover them over and let the houses be as dark as the encompassing night. Let no light wander, for the Dead are abroad; let no light stray, lest in it they should see themselves.

It is surely a very fearful thing that the Dead be let loose, dumb and shapeless, as an element within the elements; not even as a sigh in the whispering wind, not even as a tear in the weeping rain, but as a nothing at large in the midst of the world. What a strait gate is the flesh when it is shut upon the spirit, and what a large thing beyond all largeness, is the Desire of God!

For the Dead are without sound and without shape, and yet there is that which must be spoken, and who will say the words? They are voiceless and yet they bear a message,—who will deliver it?

Let us gird ourselves and go forth, we who are the frail and maimed, we, the poor and desolate; let us go out into the night to meet the Dead, that they may creep into us by our mouths and share the breath of our nostrils. Let us lend these our miserable bodies, that by them the Dead may speak.

For generations without number our fathers have done this thing and the night hath not swallowed them up; for generations without number the Dead have spoken by them and they have not been consumed. Hervé the Saint went out with them in the days that once were and sang the Song of the Souls; and Hervé the Saint was not consumed but is certainly blessed. Therefore be we not afraid.

The night is dark, surely the night is very dark, and our feet seek in trouble for their accustomed ways; where is the track of my footsteps that I may walk in it? And where are ye, my brothers, that I may hold your hands?

The wind is cold, verily the wind is cold as the hand that gives no alms; there is a weight as of ice gathering about my heart. And what is this that meets me that is blacker than the night, and colder than the north wind, and wetter than the sea? What is this that wraps me about with a smell as of the grave and a sickness like the coming of Death? What is this that breathes with my breath, and speaks with my voice, and makes of me a trumpet?

It is not we the poor and maimed, we

the aged and desolate, who go from door to door in the midst of the night, but the Dead; it is not we who cry unto you, but the Dead. For the Dead are come into us and we are the Dead. Oh ye within the houses, wake and pray, for the Dead are at your door!

The night is black, surely the night is very black, and the wind sings about the keyholes; the night is full of fingers that touch and feet that come and go, and of voices crying upon the thresholds. Blackness within blackness and the graves rent open! Oh ye within the houses, wake and pray, and hear the Song of the Souls!

For it is the night, and the hour of the night, when the Dead walk; and there is no light anywhere.

To-morrow the watchers will stand again upon the beach waiting for those that the sea brings home; and about the crosses the women will gather, peering westward into the mist of waters in the dumb anguish which is only less bitter than certainty. But there will be some who stay at home weeping, beside the empty chair that has been set back in the corner all the long summer; weeping, because in the blackness of the night, when the graves are rent open and the depths of the sea are laid bare, there was one who came home that would come no more, and the word of the dead was spoken.

For this is the Black Month, the season of widows, the month of mourning.

It is a time of mystery, a time of tears, both in High and Low Brittany. Everywhere one finds the belief that on the Eve of All Souls the dead are permitted for a moment to return and, shapeless, voiceless, to enter into the bodies of the beggars called the Children of God, and to pass in their form from house to house. In the beautiful canticle of St. Hervé it is told that as a child he went out to sing the Song of the Souls; and some of these songs still linger among the

people, where the custom is still existent. But even in the country about St. Malo, within touch of all the indifference, the unbelief, of modern life, in the midst of summer-visitors, tourists, casinos, this, as well as so many other ancient traditions, is only weakened and fallen into disuse; it is neither forgotten nor despised even where it is most rarely practised. And there is many a door, in the hamlets that border the river or the coast, or lie inland among the tobacco or buckwheat fields and the orchards, there is many a door that stands a-latch on All Souls' Eve, there is many a great round of bread that is left beside a pitcher of milk or cider upon the table. And if the Song of the Souls be sung no more in words, there is a voice in the wind that is only to be heard, so it is said, in the night and at the hour when the dead are abroad; and within the great enclosed oaken or cherry-wood beds there are still those that wake and pray.

On the outskirts of a farm not far from Dinard, for instance, there is a cottage set amid field and orchard, amid the scent of apples, and hedges of woodbine and bramble, and banks that are tufted in spring with primroses and purple with violets. Here, when All Souls comes round, it is the custom of the housewife to put out bread and cider upon the threshold, and since the death of the little daughter there has been added one of the cakes that the child loved best. They are gone in the morning, and the mother, unquestioning, is content; she goes about her work cheerfully, with a keen eye to her rights, and even, perhaps, to a little beyond them, and makes money out of the season and the summer visitors as her neighbours do. She is shrewd, a little cynical, heavy-handed with her husband and her sons; a typical peasant

of the Clos-Poulet, keen, humorous, intelligent, and angry. But in the cottage with its earthen floor and low black roof, with its constant smell of cider from the press without or the great barrels within, there stands beside the plaster Virgin a little box to hold the pence saved up for Tous-saint, to make gay "*not' petit mort* (our little dead one)," and to buy the cake that is set out on All Souls' Eve for the child that will never grow any older. It is only the outer picturesque-ness that has been shuffled out of sight in High Brittany; the ancient traditions are still there, and the dead, when they pass by the thresholds, have not been forgotten. There is not much to be found concerning the observances of All Souls in the old records of the district; the references to them are rare and meagre. The night-watchman as he passed along the street, calling the hours, added a warning that this was the night of the dead—"wherefore, pray for the souls in pain!"—and at some places it was the custom to lay down straw in the church for the faithful who spent the night there, though surely the bare flag-stones would have encouraged a more certain wakefulness. It is even stated in one such declaration, with a detail that is suggestive, that "the four waggon-loads of straw for the watch of the dead shall be delivered clean, unused, and seemly." Perhaps it is questionable whether the custom was wholly a pious one, or if it did not arise in some degree from the same feeling which led to the practice, not yet forgotten in some isolated farms, of sitting together in the kitchen from dusk to dawn on All Souls' Eve, because they were afraid to be alone when the dead walk.

But whatever it was in the past, the Day of the Dead is still a day unlike all others, especially here on the western coast, where November

is indeed the month of tears, the season of widows, where every year, at this time, there are those that wear newly their caps unbound, and covered by the black veil of mourning. It is a day unlike all others, strange, particular, apart, heralded by the long autumnal waiting when the boats are due and are looked for by every tide; heralded by the early dusk, the falling leaves, the still clear weather that is as colourless as tears, the oncome and brooding of winter. It begins in joy and ends in mourning; it passes incontinently from All Saints to All Souls, and the vespers of the festival merge and finish in the vespers of the fast.

It begins in joy. There is a clash and peal of merry bells, a riotous medley of sound that echoes from point to point and travels from hamlet to hamlet, till the bay is filled with tangled music; the soft hoarse voice of Gros Malo, a little tremulous and plaintive in his age, the clear sweetness of the curfew-bell that the Corsairs brought home long ago from Rio Janeiro, the splendid imperious bass of St. Servan, the trebles of Dinard, the gay jangle of a dozen village churches meeting, mingling, and crossing in a wonderful aerial measure. And from early morning these churches have never been empty. They are full of the warm smell of incense, and the pungency of continual occupation. *Sabots* clatter in and out, children come and go with the air of being at home, and sudden hasty genuflexions; old women sit in patient flocks about the confessionals, chairs grate on stone floors, chaplets tinkle as they shift through the hand; there is a sibillance of whispering, and the high indifferent voices of boys serving masses in the side-chapels. In the choir is a radiance spread like mist about the shining of innumerable tapers; there are pyramids of flowers,

and sheaves of gilded corn, the glitter of gold upon silk, the wide stretch of scarlet carpet. And outside in the streets, there is that indescribable expansion which comes of holiday-keeping; a pleasant noise of friendly voices, of pattering feet, of a busy leisureliness that hurries to do nothing. Everyone is out and about, occupied and idle, in a curious tempered cheerfulness of mood that just stops short of gaiety. For though it is still All Saints and festival, the time is running on; and presently it will be All Souls, and the Day of the Dead.

For it ends in mourning. Already in the cemetery there is a small increasing bustle of women carrying baskets and pots, working about the graves, making the toilette of their dead. The grass must be cut, the earth raked smooth, fresh flowers planted or set in water, and the rusty black wreath of everyday replaced by one in shining beads and tinsel. And this is not done without a glance at the sky, for rain will spoil them and they are costly; one buys them for the funeral, not to be behind one's neighbours, but after that they are kept safe at home and only brought out on festivals for all the world to see. And perhaps upon the little wooden crosses the names have grown dim with the rough handling of the weather; it is only the eyes of remembrance that can read the date, and, it may be, the *Little Angel*, *pray for us*, that was once written beneath. And so there are paint-pots and brushes needed also, and unskilled hands that set themselves to an unaccustomed work; for it costs too much to have it done by one of the trade, who would ask no less than a halfpenny for every letter.

The burial-grounds of the Clos-Poulet have a character of their own; they are at once curiously full of light and air, and of a sense of

crowding. There are rarely trees in them; sometimes a scanty row of bordering poplars, pale, shadeless, quivering, runs along the outer wall; but for the rest, they are open to the sky, large, a little bare, and yet over-filled, gray with the colour of granite, black or white where a forest of slender crosses rises in a close-pressed throng. The graves lie touching each other, with scarce passage between them, huddled together, as if for a last comfort and warmth; cut off, as it were, into over-crowded tenements by the broad alleys that lead up to the centre cross. They are every one different, and yet alike; hot-house flowers and wreaths of beads, clam-shells and daisies, marble slabs and poor little wooden shafts that splinter and bleach and wrinkle in a premature decay. There are bare mounds of earth without even these, where fir-cones are planted as a border and in the middle a cross is laid down of stones or shells; and perhaps in a broken cup there are some red berries from the hedges. And there are patches of long rank grass, coarse, yellowed by sun and rain, uncared for, unconfined; graves that there are no hands to tend, the graves of strangers, of paupers, that have fallen down as they passed by and are buried here,—for a space, till they must make room for others. And there is no one to care for them. Granite, marble, iron, wood, rich and poor, all are pressed together in a final democracy that is yet not equal; remembered and forgotten, ordered and overgrown, garden and desert, a brotherhood as separate and as homogeneous as the crowd that rubs shoulders in the street.

Up and down the paths there is a small bustle of women in black, of children bearing wreaths, of neighbours pausing to gossip and compare notes, looking about them curiously.

At other times there are new gowns and new kerchiefs to stare at, both in and out of church; to-day one dresses one's dead, and it is not less interesting.

"Look, Adèle has put nothing but clam-shells round the grave of her baby. Well, she ought to be ashamed, with her fine lace caps!"

"And Madame Chose, then? It must be true that she is going to marry again; she has not even had the grass cut over her poor husband. Well, well, well, such folk as there are in the world!"

"It's Monsieur Pivert, good man, that doesn't forget the Day of the Dead. Have you seen the angels he's brought for his daughter?—twenty francs each, I'm told, and he got them cheap, for one is a bit cracked—but then, to be sure, when one has a *concession à perpétuité*."

For it is only the well-to-do who can indulge in a *concession à perpétuité*; otherwise one buys the ground for twenty years, for ten, for seven, as the case may be, and then—well, then one has to make room for others. Even in death, the poor cannot afford to lie long and undisturbed; yet one sleeps as soundly.

A little further on a woman pats her flowers into place with the same careful pride she had given to the curls of her little angel; another surveys the effect of her wreath, as anxiously maternal as if she were tidying the boy himself before sending him to Mass on Sunday. It is still their children they are tending. And yonder again, a little glass-fronted box fastened to a white cross is opened and the contents taken out and dusted,—the toys that lie there so pathetically idle all the long year through, a tiny doll, some gay trifles from the fairs, a chaplet, a wreath of crushed white muslin roses, a medal gained at school,—the treasures of a

little life, small, foolish, beloved, taken out and dusted and set back again in order, as if made ready for hands that are coming to play with them. And since it is a world of the living as well as of the dead, a world of many motives and pitifully small humanities, there is room even here to think of the neighbours and the appearances, and the conventions, and for a proper satisfaction in throwing others into the shade, even if we have gone hungry sometimes to save up for it.

"Come and see, Marie-Josèphe, how fine my Louison is, with white paper roses—she would have made her first communion this year, you know—and a wreath of beads that cost ten francs no longer ago than yesterday. There aren't many here can say as much—but there, I'd be ashamed not to do things properly."

And the little bustle grows louder in a last hurry; the cemetery fills with chattering groups that talk in hushed voices as if they were in church, with a gossip that is lugubriously cheerful, a life that is not wholly gay about a death that is not altogether sad; till of a sudden there comes a new commotion into the air, a deep sobbing and tolling of bells, long, vociferant, stately, without haste as without joy, solemnly clamant, the voice of mourning. For All Saints is over, and this is the Vigil of the Dead.

A stream of people pours in at the great gate with a clatter and rustle, and a murmur of low-toned talking; they turn to right or left with accustomed feet, and threading their way amid the labyrinth of graves, kneel down beside their dead. All over the burial-ground there are black-veiled figures kneeling, motionless, shapeless, barely lifelike, praying in silence with bent heads and covered faces, a throng without movement, as

monumental and impassionate as the ranks of slender crosses. There is scarcely a sound from the crowd, which grows constantly denser; only the clanging bells, the tread of feet, the distant chanting of the priests as the procession leaves the church. In the cemetery itself there is the curious stillness of a multitude repressed, hushed, praying, waiting; and according to the ancient tradition of the Clos-Poulet, the other multitude that lies below wakes from its sleep, and, each rising upon his elbow, the dead also listen, watch, and wait through the long hours of All Souls; listening for the voices of those who pray for them, watching the scales of justice go down as the prayers and tears rise higher on the side of mercy, waiting, lest this may be the happy day when the penalty of sin is paid, and the doors of purgatory open to let them pass rejoicing into paradise.

The sound of singing comes nearer, and the glitter of the silver crucifix shines under the arch of the great gate; the priests and the singing-men and the altar-boys pass on towards the cross that stands in the centre, as if protecting and guarding the graves that crowd about it; and the people, following, mass themselves in the alleys, about the graves, kneeling, bare-headed, some of them weeping; a multitude of the living and the dead. The priest is old and his voice is frail and thin; the altar-boys make their responses in shrill plaintive trebles that wail across the cemetery like a rising wind: *Lord, give unto them eternal rest.*

In the distance is the silver line of sea. The priest faces it; the crucifix looks out into it shining; the incense arising from the censers drifts towards the beach. Women kneeling in the alleys look seaward, for it is late and all the boats are not yet safely home; children who will be fishermen, and

fishermen's wives, look seaward,—into the future; old men, with vague remembering eyes, look seaward also,—into the past. For here on the Brittany coast, the sea is but the larger graveyard.

Presently the crucifix and the priests and the servers pass slowly up the middle walk on their way back to the church; and behind them the people follow in a long dark line, singing the wailing cadences of the litany. The bells toll, and the voices rise and fall interminably; in the church the altar stands pale and bare against the dark hangings of the choir, and in front the bier is dressed, sombre, stately, in the blackness, surrounded with tapers, empty, yet filled with the memory of a multitude of dead. And the organ bursts into the fierce thunders of the Judgment, a long deep roar that sends a shiver through the crowd, a sound so lugubrious and solemn that the church seems to deepen in its gloom; and the voices of the singing men break forth into the *Dies Irae*, till the very air is sobbing and trembling to its cadence.

But in the cemetery there are still some who weep and pray, and underneath,—who knows?—the dead wake and watch and listen through the long hours of All Souls. And always in the distance the sea heaves restlessly, uneasily, as a sleeper tosses in his bed. *Out of the depths have I called unto Thee, oh Lord!*

One does not wish to exaggerate: there is no art so inartistic as that which contrives effects; but surely the Day of the Dead is beautiful and touching. Some eyes may see in it no more than a crowd of villagers or townsfolk in their sombre Sunday clothes, a cemetery with ugly corners heaped with withered flowers and rot-

ting wood, with weeds greening some of its alleys and overgrown graves jostling the most cared for; a profusion of bead and porcelain wreaths, gaudy often, stiff and meretricious always; with a primitive *naïveté* in its crosses of moulded iron or black-painted wood, or the weather-stained white and blue of the children's quarter. Even the fine granite here and there only increases the simplicity, the poverty, of the rest. And among the crowd there may be many who dress their dead only to emulate their neighbours, or weep merely because it is proper to weep on All Souls, as a matter of convention.

All this is true. And yet, perhaps, it is the very contrast and mixture of so many motives, so many emotions, so many large passions and small ignoble things that make up the whole; the very clashing and blending of so many impressions that stirs one's sympathy. Under the grey sky, by the greyer sea, one forgets all but the mass of people kneeling amid the graves, the hush and pause, the linking for a moment of a life so low and poor and narrow with the dignity of death; the prayer for rest and peace from the restless and unpeaceful, for light, from those who are blind. No doubt there is much that is poor and coarse, a great deal that is insincere, shallow, and conventional, but that is humanity; and it is only, after all, the surface of things that is unbeautiful. The *terreneueas* is rough and brutal, but the women whose men have not come home do not weep the less; the peasant is coarse, commonplace, grasping, but his tears are none the sweeter to him. Underlying the conventions, the tawdry wreaths, the paper roses, there is a sincerity that is sometimes tragic.

THE CAMPAIGN OF DOUAI.

CHAPTER IV.

As the column wound its slow way up the road between the high poplars, Walter felt his spirits rise at the thought that at last he was actually taking part in a campaign which would make history. He was one of a British force committed to what was commonly regarded as a desperate enterprise. What chance could Great Britain have against one of the most powerful military nations of Europe, Great Britain, a country which relied on voluntary enlistment to fill the ranks of her army, and whose total armed strength was but a fraction of that which could be put into the field by France? Certainly Britain was fortunate in having a military power like Germany on her side; alone, however bravely and skilfully her soldiers might fight, it was inevitable that they would be overwhelmed by numbers.

As the column strode along, it was interesting to watch the stir and bustle in the fields on either side of the road. The troops of the Fourth Division were preparing for their bivouac, and truly it was no hardship to have to sleep under the stars on that warm August night. The sight of all these masses of men, waggons, and horses astonished Walter, who found it hard to believe that they had all been landed in some four or five hours. At one place where there was a short halt (some obstruction in front having delayed the advance of the column), Walter found himself standing close to the waggons of the ammunition-column of the

Fourth Division. These waggons were already drawn up in long rows; the horses were on their picket-lines busy at their evening feed, while the men lay in groups on the grass, watching the passing troops. Among a group of officers Walter recognised a young gunner whom he knew; the recognition was mutual, and his friend strode across to meet him. After the first greeting Walter began to enquire how such extraordinarily rapid progress had been made with the disembarkation.

"My dear boy," said his friend, "it was the simplest thing in the world. We never went into the river-mouth at all, but landed on the beach, just below where we are now. Being in very light-draught transports, we got in fairly close and swum the horses ashore. We came ashore in boats, and the waggons were hoisted out into lighters, a crowd of which had been towed across from Dover. Of course it was the greatest bit of luck that it was so calm; if there had been any sea on, it would have been impossible for troops to land where we did. Then, the wind being off shore helped us a lot. Why, we had four or five cavalry regiments ashore within an hour and a half of dropping anchor. Look there," he added, pointing out to sea, "there are all the ships going back to Dover."

Walter was just able to distinguish in the gathering dusk the dark mass of the great flotilla fading away towards the English Coast. "I am rather surprised," he said, "that we weren't more bothered by their torpedo flotilla from Boulogne."

"My dear boy, their torpedo-boats were all very well at the beginning of the war; but now, they're all knocked endways. Besides, you can bet your hat we had a good watch over their ports with our own destroyers. However, they might be awkward at night, so I suppose that's why our ships are clearing out. The ones in the river will have to take their chance; I expect they will rig up some sort of boom-defence. I bet they'll be jolly busy in the river to-night with the disembarkation. See, there are the electric lights going already. Thank heavens I'm not a transport-officer!"

Looking back towards the town which they had left, Walter could see the electric lamps glowing in white radiance from the masts of the ships, and the rattle of the chains of the derricks and the noise of the busy crowd below, reduced by the distance to a mere murmur, were still distinctly audible. As he gazed, the column resumed its march, and, bidding his friend good-night, Walter hastened to catch up his company.

Passing through the village of Lefaux, about a mile and a half out of Etaples, Walter noticed that fighting must have taken place there. A number of the cottages were still smouldering, and showing only charred ruins as the remains of what that morning had probably been comfortable homes. Other cottages also showed signs of having been under fire, chimney-pots having been dislodged, windows broken, and walls gapped in places. In this village the inhabitants still remained, mostly gazing in little groups with sullen fury on the passing soldiers; but it was noticeable that there were no able-bodied men among them; they had all been taken to serve in the armies mustering in defence of their native land. The little street was

full of Staff-officers of the Sixth Division, at least so Walter gathered from a few words he exchanged with one of them; but no one seemed to know anything about the fighting which must have taken place there during the day.

As the column swung down the hill into the village of Frencq, a larger place than Lefaux, loud and tumultuous cheering from the troops in the bivouac they had just passed caused great excitement and speculation among the men. Walter was amused to hear some of the random guesses at the causes of the outburst. The favourite theory seemed to be that a telegram must have arrived to tell them that a certain Royal Prince had come to take command in person. Before the sailing of the expedition the appointment of this personage to the chief command had been hotly debated in England. The bulk of military opinion, certainly among the rank and file, had been in favour of such an appointment, but political considerations had at last led to the abandonment of the idea. However, the men of the Twelfth Brigade were not to remain long in ignorance of the good news, for shouts of *left incline* were soon passed from the rear, and as soon as the way was cleared the General of the Sixth Division, Sir Charles Browne, followed by several Staff-officers, came cantering along in the twilight. As they came past, dusty and jaded-looking, the infantry soldiers crowding to the left of the road to get out of their way, one of the Staff, noticing that Walter was an officer, checked his horse momentarily and, leaning towards him, called out, "The news has just come that the German army fought a big battle at Mezières yesterday, and have won a great victory." The men crowding near failed to catch the meaning of the message and

Walter was overwhelmed with questions. "What did he say, sir?" "What is it, sir?" Walter passed on the good news: "The French have had a licking yesterday from the Germans." "Begor, and they'll get another from us to-morrow, boys!" and then the cheering began.

In Frencq there was great excitement as they marched through. Sir Charles Browne had entered the house assigned to him for his quarters, but many of the officers of the Staff were standing outside, and the news of the German victory seemed to have become pretty well known to judge from the cheering groups of soldiery at every door, and the generally well-pleased expression of all except the few unfortunate inhabitants who skulked in the shadows on the outskirts of the throng. Frencq also, but to a less degree, showed signs of having been under fire; and outside the town the first wounded of the war were visible in an ambulance standing a little way off the main road. It was now quite dark, but the lantern hanging from the ridge-pole of a small tent, clearly of French pattern, showed the surgeons bending over one or two swathed figures lying on some straw, while outside the tent three French soldiers, men of the *Chasseurs à Cheval*, were lying on the ground, their heads bandaged, and one of them with his leg bound in splints. Many curious glances were thrown at these poor fellows by the passing troops. They lay as in a stupor, their eyes wide open but seeing nothing, apparently oblivious to their surroundings. The grey-clad troops passing them in the dusk in endless procession might have had no existence for all the interest they appeared to arouse in these unhappy victims of war. To the Irishmen of Walter's battalion these poor wretches appeared to be

more objects of sympathy than anything else. "Be jabbers," muttered one rough-looking giant, shifting his rifle from one shoulder to the other as he spoke, "them poor chaps have had their dose anyways!" "They've got what you'll maybe be getting to-morrow, Pat," said the regimental wit, a remark which was received with but feeble laughter by the men near, who doubtless felt that there was a substratum of probability in the jest which somehow took away from their enjoyment.

Thus the column tramped on, the constant and scientific marching-training which the men had been put through during the last two months showing in the regularity of their stride and the ease with which they covered the ground. Before long they passed in silence through another village, the head of the column being sharply challenged by the alert sentinels, and turning away from the high road at last began to breast the ascent to the ground on which they were to pass the night. The sky had now cleared, and by the light of the moon the nature of the surrounding country could be seen with some distinctness. There were no fences to the road, and field after field seemed to stretch away on every side in gentle undulations, the skyline being here and there broken by little copses or by the chimneys of one of the numerous farmhouses. Everywhere troops appeared to be preparing for the night. Against innumerable fires were outlined the dark forms of the busy cooks, and now and then an agreeable whiff reminded the hungry soldiers that it was some hours since they had had anything to eat. Here long rows of guns and limbers, indistinct and ghostly under the rays of the moon, showed where artillery was camped: in another place lines of waggons

marked where train or baggage was placed for the night; and everywhere were to be seen men wandering in search of the corps from which they had strayed. A slight mist rising from the earth gave a curious air of unreality to the scene, seeming to increase the size of the men and animals, while rendering the background hazy and indistinct in some places, in startling contrast to the whiteness of the moonlight and the blackness and sharpness of the shadows on the higher and clearer ground.

While the men were marching mechanically on, their attention absorbed in the novel scene around them, they were suddenly recalled to the realities of the moment by their Colonel calling them to attention. In another moment column was formed; then the leading company, having reached the ground indicated by the Brigade-Major, was halted and the remainder of the battalion formed quarter-column on it and halted in their turn. The remaining battalions of the brigade had moved further to the front, and the rearmost could now be seen in the moonlight forming up in the deep shadow of some farm-buildings. Colonel Daunt stood his men at ease, and, calling the officers around him, indicated to them the buildings, beside which they were standing, as the quarters assigned to the battalion. "There are two barns we can use, gentlemen," he said; "the right half battalion will occupy the nearest, the left half the other one. The officers will be quartered in the farmhouse itself. The company cooks will start their fires on this side of the wall; no fire or smoking will be allowed in the neighbourhood of the barns. The adjutant will place a sentry at the entrances to the farmyards; these sentries will be furnished by the quarter-guard, who will be

found separate quarters. The men must be cautioned against straying, and against smoking in the farmyard or barns. Any man disobeying these orders will be severely punished——" and so on, till the Colonel had prepared for every contingency likely to occur.

However, everything comes to an end in time, and Walter was by no means sorry when he was at last able to unbuckle his sword-belt and throw himself at full length on the brick floor of the large farm-kitchen, on the door of which some wag had found time to chalk in large letters *Hôtel Cecil*. There were only two chairs and a rough oaken settle in the room, which were of course appropriated by the Colonel and two of the senior officers, while the rest, like Walter, made themselves free of the floor. A good fire was soon set going on the hearth, plenty of wood being discovered in an outhouse, and as the flames flickered higher the room soon assumed quite a cheerful appearance. Over the fireplace was a cheap chromolithograph of the first Napoleon, on an impossible horse with the Pyramids in the background, and some religious pictures ornamented the other walls of the room. From the ceiling hung great ropes of onions, which in the dancing firelight cast fantastic shadows on the walls. The officers, worn out more by excitement than by actual fatigue, stretched their limbs on the floor, and began to think of food. The Colonel and other mounted officers were more concerned as to the fate of their horses, which they had not seen since the disembarkation. The adjutant, however, who just then came in, was able to set their minds at rest on that score, all the horses, who had trotted on after the baggage, having arrived in camp without any injury. "The rations have just been issued, sir," he went on; "they are cooked

rations, so the men will have to eat them cold, and I have given orders for the rations to be cooked now for to-morrow, so that they can be issued before we start. I suppose there will be no objection, sir, to the cooks riding on the waggons? You see, they will be working most of the night. There is some grumbling about the water, sir. The Army Service Corps officer got here before us, and has put the patent filter attachment on to all the pumps, and the water runs through very slowly; it will be hours at this rate before all the men get a drink. I have had to put a sentry over the stream where the horses are being watered, to prevent them getting their bottles filled there."

Colonel Daunt was puzzled in this emergency; he stroked his moustache reflectively. "It is a pity about those infernal filters. I wish to heaven they had been left behind; they're getting too fond of coddling Tommy. After the orders that have been issued on the subject, I simply daren't let 'em drink from the stream, though a few years ago they would all have done it and been none the worse. See that they're all turned in, water or no water. Damn it, they didn't come all this way to drink water! I saw some big tubs outside; let the filters run into them, and in the morning there will be enough for all the water-bottles. Of course the cooks can go on the waggons. By the way, *reveillé* is to sound at four-thirty to-morrow; warn the cooks that there must be hot cocoa for the battalion by four forty-five. I suppose the cocoa has come all right?"

The hard-worked adjutant saluted, and retired to carry out the Colonel's orders through the medium of the captain and subaltern of the day who were already outside. The other officers sat in gloomy silence, staring at the fire and wondering when there

would be anything to eat, till the belated arrival of the mess-sergeant made things more comfortable. Sergeant Murphy was a man of resource, and had added to the cooked rations provided by Government a basket of excellent sandwiches and some bottled beer, which he had managed to get hold of when leaving the transport. One of the mess-waiters, in his service equipment like all the other men, helped the sergeant to lay out the food in an appetising a manner as possible on the kitchen-table, a table-cloth (vaguely understood to have been *borrowed* by Sergeant Murphy from somewhere) giving quite an air of refinement to the meal. The hungry officers soon produced plates, knives, and forks from their haversacks, and in a very few minutes all were busy making a clearance of the victuals before them.

There was now a general curiosity as to where they were to sleep. They soon learned that, with the exception of four of the seniors who had found accommodation in an adjoining room, they would have to sleep where they were. "I don't want to disturb the inhabitants more than I can help," said the Colonel; "they're a bit upset as it is, and I promised to leave them undisturbed in the rest of the house. There is nobody but an old man and his wife, who told me that they had two sons serving in the French army, and also that all their working men had gone off to serve." The conversation now became general, till some one was bold enough to ask the Colonel what chance he thought the British had with the army which the French would be sure to bring against them to-morrow or next day. As this was a question on which all had some curiosity, there was a general silence for the reply.

"A couple of years ago," said Colonel Daunt, stretching out his

legs to the fire and puffing at his pipe, "I should have said that no army we could put in the field would have the slightest chance against any first-class European Power. I don't think the same to-day; and my reason is this, that every man we have here is physically a very far finer fellow than the average man who will be pitted against him. Three years ago we had only seventeen batteries to an army-corps, and those were only on paper, except perhaps for one or two corps; now we have twenty-four. Three years ago our soldiers only fired two hundred rounds annually in their course of musketry; the last two years they have fired over a thousand rounds a man, and, as you all know, this year we have fired precious near two thousand rounds a man. I call our fellows now really experts with their rifles. I remember the Boers in 1881, and I tell you that the average British Tommy is to-day a better shot, both at a moving and a standing target. Then we are enormously more mobile. If our manoeuvres have taught us nothing else, they have taught us what we required in that respect, and, by Jove, we have made some use of our lesson. I believe that our inferior numbers will be an absolute advantage. Of course these things have cost money, tons of money, but the British tax-payer will thank his stars to-morrow or the next day that he found the money." With that the Colonel rose and knocked the ashes out of his pipe. "Good-night all; it's high time we were asleep." He stopped at the door. "One other thing: while all these Continental Powers have been putting their money into *the mass*, we've been putting ours into the *man*; and don't forget it's the man behind the gun every time."

Colonel Daunt's little speech had an excellent effect. The officers of

the Fusiliers, like most British officers, had been brought up to believe in the bugbear of Continental superiority, and it was a relief to hear such very good reasons for looking forward to their own success. However, it was clearly bed-time, and, unrolling their cloaks and blankets, they soon were all stretched out, their heads resting on their haversacks, their feet encased in easy canvas slippers, seeking that repose which was needed to prepare them for the unknown trials of the morrow.

CHAPTER V.

WALTER seemed, as he afterwards thought, to have been hardly asleep for five minutes when he was awaked by some one stirring close to him, and, opening his eyes, he lay for a few moments trying to rouse himself to a sense of where he was. The room was in darkness, save for the flickering light of the fire, on which fresh wood spluttered and crackled with a cheerful sound, and two men were softly stepping about the sleepers, gathering as they moved the swords, boots, and other odds and ends with which the floor was strewn. A whispering outside the door showed that they were not the only ones about, and it suddenly dawned on Walter's wakening senses that these men were servants who had come for their masters' boots and other things which might require cleaning. "Is Muldoon there?" he enquired in a sleepy voice. "He's outside the door, your Honour," was the reply; so Walter slowly got to his feet, becoming aware as he did so that a bed on a brick floor is apt to mean stiffness in the joints and muscles, and, gathering up his belongings, stepped softly out into the courtyard. Early as it was, and a glance at his watch showed him that it was

not quite four, a number of the men seemed to be already astir. Several of the officers' servants were busy polishing their masters' boots and brushing the white dust of the day before from their putties, while other groups were standing outside the farmyard watching the cooks, now busy with preparations for breakfast, and enjoying a morning pipe while they did so.

The faithful Muldoon saw Walter as he came out of the house, and quickly relieved him of the things he was carrying. "Sure, what did you want to be waking so soon for, sir? You'll be wanting a sleep bad enough before this day's out, I'm thinking. I'll clean all your things now, sir, and you'll find them all ready for you when you want them. Wash, is it, sir? There's no place but the stream beyant. Them Army Service Corps people, bad cess to them, have put filters on all the pumps, and a drop of water is as hard to get, or harder, than a drop of whiskey in the old country. Here's your towel, sir, and your soap."

Walter went off to the stream, about fifty yards from the farm, where he made his morning-toilet in the best way he could. A number of men, bent on the same errand, had been stopped by the sentry and were standing disconsolate with their towels in their hands. Walter took upon himself to pass these men down to the water, making a corporal who happened to be with them responsible for the party, and they were soon joyfully splashing about in the little stream.

On his way back Walter stopped to survey the scene before him. Though a grey glimmer in the east showed that dawn was at hand, the day had not yet broken, and the light from the cooking-fires served rather to accentuate the surrounding dark-

ness than to relieve it. Round these fires many men were moving, and a murmur, like that from a disturbed beehive, showed that the army was waking for another day. The light momentarily increased, and the combined effect of the dawn, the fires, and the morning mist, which was swirled hither and thither in fleecy wisps of vapour, as it was now driven asunder now banked in masses by the rising breeze, made as curious and picturesque a scene as that which the moonlight had shown a few hours earlier.

While he was standing thus, forgetful for the moment of the realities of his position, he was suddenly recalled to himself by a strange voice politely bidding him good-morning. Walter turned, and at first found some difficulty in suppressing a laugh at the quaint figure before him. The stranger was a very tall, lean individual, with a straggling beard and long moustaches, wearing smoked glass spectacles, and dressed in the most curious parody of a military uniform which Walter had ever seen. On his head was a very large pith helmet, similar to the *solar topee* worn in the tropics, with a blue veil twisted round it, while his dress was a Norfolk-jacket and riding-breeches of *khaki* serge, finished off with putties of the same material. A pair of field-glasses dangled at one hip, a large water-bottle at the other, and a stout leather belt round his waist carried two large pouches, which Walter afterwards found contained note-books and writing materials. Over one shoulder was slung a large and well filled haversack, over the other a leather case which obviously contained a small camera, and in one hand he carried a large green umbrella. Clearly Walter saw before him one of the correspondents permitted to accompany the army, a

supposition borne out by the ornamental metal badge worn as a brassard on his left arm. Walter returned his salutation, and the stranger went on to explain: "I must apologise, sir, for the intrusion, but I am Richard Cary Fitzgerald of *THE NEW YORK SENTINEL*, and I am looking for my old friend Colonel Daunt of the Royal Ulster Fusiliers. If you can give me any assistance in my search, I shall be under a heavy obligation to you." Walter remembered having heard his Colonel speak of a Mr. Fitzgerald as an American journalist whom he had met on several occasions, and accordingly vouchsafed the information that the Ulster Fusiliers were bivouacked close at hand, and that he himself was an officer in that corps.

Fitzgerald was delighted. "This is the best bit of luck I have had yet," he said. "I have been on the tramp for the last six hours trying to locate this battalion. Your Staff may be very efficient, sir,—I have no doubt it is,—but they have no use for American correspondents, and I could get no information out of them."

"I should think you will want some sleep," suggested Walter, "as you have been up all night, and I would advise you to try and get some now, as we shall probably be starting in another hour or so."

Fitzgerald was indignant at the idea. "Sleep, sir! No, sir, I have been asleep, I may say, since my last campaign, in Manila, three years ago. This world is getting too peaceable for men of my vocation. Sleep! I estimate that the two hours I had last night, or last evening I should say, will carry me on for another fourteen hours. We shall have some stirring work to-day, sir."

"Did you see the disembarkation?" asked Walter.

"Every circumstance of it," was the answer. "I cabled twenty words

through to London last night. Twenty words! Good heavens, what with your censors and the rush on the wires I wonder I got anything through. But it will expand, sir, it will expand. All America knows now that the British force has landed practically unopposed, though there you had more luck than anyone could have anticipated. Your chaps must have caught the French napping for once. They'll be back to-day though, and I suspicion, sir, that you'll have to hold on with your eyelids to what you've got or you'll find yourselves swimming in the Channel before forty-eight hours are over. So far you've done remarkably well. I have seen as much fighting as most men, both on sea and on shore, and I never saw smarter work than yesterday, no, nor anything approaching it. Say, your Staff must have been working this out ever since the war began. The whole arrangements are the most perfect and the most complete you could make them. Yesterday evening I went over two of the hospital-ships. Have you seen them, sir? No? Well, I sincerely hope that you won't, though for comfort and general perfection they are the best things of the kind that I have ever seen. I guess that you'll see a good deal of me during this campaign. I have received permission to attach myself to your battalion, being an old friend of the Colonel's, instead of being herded about with the other correspondents, who've all been placed under charge of Staff-officers, or else restricted from going to the front. Of course I shall have to take my stuff to the censor at the Army-Corps Headquarters every time I want to cable, and I have been informed that I must take the risk of being shot or hanged as a spy if the other chaps get hold of me. But I guess I was never born to be hanged. I've got

out of a few tight places in my life, and I calculate on getting much fresher stuff for my journal by playing my own hand."

It was now almost light, and the sights and sounds on all sides told that the preparations for a move were already well advanced. Ration-parties were crowding round the waggons to draw the supplies which would be distributed later on to the individual soldier: horses were being harnessed and men putting on their accoutrements; and as Walter, accompanied by the American, entered the farm where he had spent the night, the gradually increasing roar of traffic from the road below told him that the cavalry and horse-artillery were already moving out in force to clear the way for the slower bulk of the army. Colonel Daunt was well pleased to see Fitzgerald, with whom he had struck up a friendship many years before in the Soudan, and Walter was left free to attend to his own duties. His captain was hastily completing his toilet, and finding his things ready for him, as spotlessly clean as if Muldoon had been preparing for a full-dress parade at home, our hero quickly followed his example. The mess-sergeant and his two assistants were busy with the breakfast, and Walter was amused to find that Sergeant Murphy had, in some fashion known only to himself, already made friends with the old couple to whom the farm belonged, who had sold him a number of eggs and who were now, with many gesticulations and much pantomime, helping the ruthless invader, as represented by the mess-sergeant, in his work.

All this time no bugles had sounded, orders to that effect having been issued during the night, and the routine was being carried on in a silence very unusual.

So soon as Walter was dressed he set off to find his company, to see that rations had been issued to all his men, and that the breakfast of cocoa, bread, and tablets of prepared meat was ready. The rations were for use that day, and were already cooked, each ration, prepared on a new and scientific process, being packed into a small metal case which fitted into the mess-tin. Half of this consisted of a very palatable and sustaining porridge, which the men could eat cold as easily as hot, the remainder being the equivalent of a pound and a half of meat. In its raw state this ration occupied an exceedingly small space, and was issued in cubical metal cases, each case containing complete rations for ten men; the process of cooking naturally increased the bulk considerably, but made the food very much more wholesome and agreeable, though in case of necessity it could be eaten raw. The emergency-ration, to which allusion has already been made, was of the same nature, but was ready for use at any time, though strict orders had been issued that it was only to be used, as its name implied, on an emergency. The men were all in great spirits, and in the best possible condition.

Having reported to Carstairs that all was correct, Walter returned to the farm (which he already found himself calling the mess) and set to work with a vigorous appetite on the breakfast which Sergeant Murphy had prepared for them. He found Fitzgerald already accepted as a member of the mess, and hugely delighting a group of the younger officers by his conversation. Colonel Daunt, with his adjutant and an officer of the Brigade-Staff, could be seen through the half-open door, busy in the adjoining room over a map which all three officers were intently study-

ing. It was clear that Fitzgerald would have given a good deal to have assisted at this little conference, but he had too much tact to push himself forward uninvited, and doubtless reflected that the Colonel would ultimately give him as much information as he dared.

At last the conference was over; the Staff-officer took his departure, Colonel Daunt going to the door to see him off. As he swung himself on to his horse, Walter heard him say: "You quite understand, Colonel? You lead the column—the road by Enquin and Hucqueliers—the Highlanders follow you, then the guns—no bands to play. Good-bye, sir," and, saluting, he cantered off, while the Colonel, thoughtful and reserved, came back to the table and finished his breakfast in silence. Walter and most of his brother-officers strolled outside, and proceeded to solace themselves with tobacco and conjecture.

The sun was now over the horizon, and before long the adjutant came out to tell the officers that the Colonel wished them to warn their men to get ready for the march, and that, when this was done, he wished to say a few words to them as to the duty to devolve on the battalion during the day. A few moments sufficed for the first task; indeed, it was hardly necessary to caution the men to get ready, as all had been for some time anxiously awaiting the order to fall in, and the Colonel soon had all his officers before him. He was brief and to the point. The enemy, he told them, had been met with, but only in small force, by the cavalry; the outposts had been reconnoitred during the night by small patrols, but everywhere the enemy had retired before our mounted troops, and it was considered unlikely that he had any considerable force in the neighbourhood. In their

retirement his patrols had all fallen back in an easterly and south-easterly direction; it was fair, therefore, to assume that they had been sent out from a force lying in that direction, and that there was no force requiring consideration on our left flank, though an infantry brigade with some guns had been detailed in support of the large force of yeomanry watching that flank. "This brigade," the Colonel said, looking at his watch, "has already started. We are to move along the road leading through Enquin (a village which you will see on your maps) and Hucqueliers, and have been given the post of honour in the front. The Gordon Highlanders will follow us, and behind them will come the three field-batteries which have been attached to the advanced guard. In front of all is the light cavalry brigade with a horse-battery, and between them and ourselves will be the corps-cavalry and two batteries of horse-artillery; we ought not, therefore, to run any risk of surprise. With the corps-cavalry there are two battalions of mounted infantry and a balloon-detachment, though I am afraid that the latter will be of little use if the wind continues to rise. Number One Company) yours, Captain Carstairs) will lead the battalion. You will send on a section under a subaltern about three hundred yards ahead of you; the remainder of the battalion will follow about the same distance in your rear; the battalion scouts will watch your flanks. Now we will fall in, gentlemen."

The officers saluted and departed to their companies, and in a few minutes the battalion was standing ready for the march, the waggons packed, the led horses and machine-guns in their places in rear. The orders provided for the rendezvous of the brigade on the left side of

the road leading out of Hubersent ; accordingly the battalion was promptly placed in motion and, with Colonel Daunt at its head, quickly wound its way from column into column of route, and, disdaining the dusty highway already crowded with troops, struck boldly across country for the rendezvous. Walter's company, which was to lead during the day, was now in front, and he had therefore a good view of what was going on, unimpeded by the dust which rose freely from the sun-baked ground. The other battalions of the brigade were moving across the fields on a line parallel to that taken by the Ulster Fusiliers, and Walter watched with admiration the elastic step and fine military bearing of that splendid Highland regiment which was to march in support of the Fusiliers during the day. The Brigadier and his little Staff, four officers in all, rode ahead at a walking pace ; behind each column followed the ammunition-mules, the waggons, and the machine-guns bumping over the uneven ground, while some fifty yards or so in advance rode the mounted scouts, of whom half-a-dozen had recently been attached to each infantry battalion, men specially selected for their intelligence and aptitude for scouting duties, mounted on small and active horses. The artillery was waiting at the rendezvous, the men standing by their horses, the officers chatting in little groups, the sombre line of guns and waggons looking grim and business-like. The field-telegraph was already up along the road by which they were to march, and in the distance Walter could see the sappers, with their waggons, elevating the wire, already laid, on slender poles as they went along. As the Fusiliers reached the rendezvous the Brigade-Major, cantering over, signed for

them to lead on down the road, and at the same time told Colonel Daunt that, if he was ready, he might go on at once. Accordingly the mounted scouts cantered out, three to each flank, covering roughly speaking a distance of about four or five hundred yards on each side of the road, while Walter led on his section to act as the point of the advanced guard.

CHAPTER VI.

As our hero took his place in front of his little detachment, he felt that at last the hour of his first battle was at hand. It was to him, as indeed to all other officers with the invading army, almost incredible that they should have been permitted to advance so far without opposition. At that time he was as ignorant as were other regimental officers that the demonstrations which the British fleet had made along other parts of the French coast had succeeded in misleading the defence, a situation which was further complicated by the simultaneous invasion of France by two German armies. Puzzling as this absence of resistance was, however, it was most improbable that it would last for long, and as Walter led his men along that dusty highroad with their faces to the newly risen sun, he momentarily expected to hear sounds of firing in front of him, where moved the British cavalry covering the front of the invaders with a network of scouts. Looking back, as he topped the ascent leading to the little village of Rolet, Walter was grateful to the fate which had given him a position in front of the marching columns and so clear of the choking dust which already enveloped the troops marching in rear. The wind was blowing freshly from the east, which would obviously be of advantage to the British, should troops and stores re-

main to be disembarked, and also from the fact that it would convey to the rear the sounds of any collision with the enemy in front; on the other hand, it was against the use of the captive balloons, which had been freely employed on the day of the disembarkation, and hence careful scouting by the cavalry was all the more necessary. The little village of Rolet was already wide awake, the country people, to all appearance a thrifty and hardworking race, standing at their doors looking with lowering brows at the passing troops, some of them calling down maledictions on their heads in unintelligible patois, but for the most part gloomy and apprehensive, astonished at the influx of invaders and paralysed at the absence of any attempt to drive them back to the ships which had brought them. As at the other villages they had passed through, the absence of men of age to bear arms was remarkable; they, with the local *gendarmerie*, had no doubt all gone to take their places in the ranks.

The scenery through which the Fusiliers were now passing differed in no respect from that near Hubersent. The country was cultivated, farm-houses being dotted here and there over the landscape, the quaint high-gabled buildings with their tiled roofs looking far more picturesque than the farms with which Walter was acquainted in his own country; while here and there copses gave an air of variety to a scene which might otherwise have been too tame in its monotony. The surface was still gently undulating, a fact emphasised by the manner in which the highways, with their invariable fringe of poplars, wound their sinuous way up the slopes and across the valleys. Work in the fields was at a standstill, but in most cases the harvest had been gathered, as was shown by the bare

land and the fine ricks in so many of the farm-yards, ricks on which many a British Supply-Officer looked that day with satisfaction and thankfulness. In some places the corn was still uncut, in others it was still in stooks; in these cases the peasants were making no effort to continue the harvest, but had either retired within their houses or were standing in groups muttering curses on the invaders.

As Rolet was left behind, the road descended into a little valley and at the foot of the ascent leading up to the rising ground opposite, Walter overtook the waggons of the telegraph-corps, who were busy with their task of erecting and occasionally testing the wire laid by the advanced troops. A subaltern of engineers was riding beside the waggon, and, as Walter passed, he volunteered the information that there was some fighting going on in front at that moment.

"Why, have you seen anything of it?" asked Walter, curious to know the source of this intelligence.

"No, I've seen nothing, but I've got a tap on the wire," answered the young sapper, pointing to a man sitting on the waggons with a curious metal attachment strapped on to one side of his head. "It is a new dodge, you know. We can take in all the messages passing, and we've just heard that the enemy's cavalry have been met with, that there has been a skirmish or two, and that so far our chaps have had the best of it."

"Then we shall probably hear the guns soon," said Walter; "they are sure to have their horse-artillery somewhere handy."

"I hope so; the sooner the real thing begins the better. Good luck to you," and the young engineer turned again to his own duty.

Along the crest of the gentle ascent which they were now breasting ran a

stretch of woodland, and, though there was no doubt that it had been searched by the cavalry long before, yet Walter thought it as well to be on the safe side, and by a whistle and a wave of his arm conveyed an order to the mounted scouts to search it again. This was promptly done. A scout cantered off to each end of the little belt of wood, which might have been about three-quarters of a mile in length, while their comrades, about one hundred and fifty yards apart, reined up their horses some little distance from the near edge. A brief pause, and then the flanking scouts reappeared and signalled that all was clear, on which the rest of the party trotted forward and soon disappeared in the shadow of the trees, their active horses scrambling over the rough ground and forcing their way through the undergrowth. The wood was of no great depth, and in a very few minutes the scouts reappeared and made the signal *no enemy in sight*. While these precautions were being taken Walter had not checked the march of his section, as he well knew the importance of avoiding any halts which were not inevitable. Nothing is more wearisome to troops than constant halts, and in a long column a halt of a very few minutes at the head is apt to become a tedious wait for those in rear.

As the leading section of the Fusiliers left the shadow of the wood they found themselves at the top of the gentle slopes from which they could look into the valley of the little stream on which Enquin stands, and here, for the first time, Walter saw the cavalry which had been scouting in the front all the morning. A squadron was proceeding at a walking pace up the further side of the valley; on the crest of the hill, or rather slightly withdrawn from the crest on the near side of it, two batteries of

artillery stood unlimbered, and fleecy clouds of dust rising beyond the low hills on the other side of the stream indicated that large bodies of cavalry were in motion in that direction also. To the south of Enquin the slopes rising from the valley were crowned here and there by little clumps of woodland, and between these more dust-clouds, rising high and moving fast, indicated that there also mounted troops were manœuvring. As Walter watched for some signs that the enemy had been at last strong enough to make a stand, he saw the guns limber up with great speed and disappear at a trot over the horizon, while some companies of mounted infantry, who had been concealed from his view by one of the little clumps aforesaid, now came out into the open and disappeared after the guns. The squadron, which had been leisurely ascending the hill, also quickened its pace when the top had been reached, and soon nothing was left to indicate that troops were moving in front but the high dust-clouds rising all along the horizon.

As our hero and his men were marching along mechanically, their whole attention occupied with the proceedings of the cavalry in front, a sharp whistle from the rear suddenly recalled them to the fact that the main body had come to a halt. Walter promptly obeyed the signal, and gave the men permission to rest by the side of the road, a glance at his watch showing him that he had now been an hour on the march and consequently, by regulation, should halt for five minutes. Though it was not yet seven o'clock the sun had already begun to assert its power, and it was by no means unpleasant to rest quietly for a few moments. While lying on his side watching with his glasses the distant signs of the cavalry and occupied with speculations as to

what was going on on the other side of the valley, he was suddenly conscious that his American friend of the morning was standing beside him.

Fitzgerald was leaning on a bicycle, the dust on his clothing and his heated countenance showing that he had not been idle during the advance. "I guess, Mr. Desmond," he said, "you have rather the post of honour here. You will have a powerful chance of seeing anything that happens. I must go on directly and watch the work of your cavalry. Hello! I see they're trying to raise the balloon."

As he spoke a balloon rose over the high ground to the east, and as it rose the boom of guns came rolling across the valley, repeated and multiplied by the numerous echoes. The wind, however, was too much for it. It swayed dangerously to and fro, at one time almost touching the ground overpowered by a gust, at another rebounding into the air during a lull. While they were watching the struggle the signal to march was passed on from the rear, and the little party of the Fusiliers leading the column again took to the road, Walter as before marching in front.

Fitzgerald wheeled his bicycle alongside. "I guess," he explained, "that I'll push this thing to the top of the hill. This country's a bit too switch-backy for a wheel."

"Where have you been all the morning?" asked Walter.

"Me? Oh, I've been cruising around, and I think I've sized up the situation pretty well. When you marched off, I wheeled down to the coast and saw your ships still busy landing stores and gear of sorts. They've already got a locomotive at work on the Arras line; at least I saw the smoke of one moving along from Etaples, and it seemed to me that it must have had a heavy load

behind it. The puffs were very large and came slowly. Snakes! There goes the old balloon," and as he spoke the balloon came rapidly down, appearing to collapse on the ground from the quickness with which it disappeared. "I guess she had a few shot in her silk," he went on; "she went down so sudden. Say, your fellows have got mighty smart in the last year or two. I saw your General (the man who commands this corps, I mean), and he's got the dandiest arrangement I ever saw for knowing what's going on in front. When you started this morning there was the telegraph-van (that thing like a bathing-box, I mean,) at Hubersent. They've a lot of wheelmen orderlies (cyclists, you call 'em,) at the office, and as the news comes in these chaps wheel off like hell to the General, who is following this brigade. Besides the news from the front, they have a wire running out to the north, where Colonel Daunt told me you had a brigade as a covering-party. Oh, he knows what's going on right enough. Yesterday when the balloon was up, one of his Staff was in telephonic communication with the man in it all the time. There's one thing, however, I've not seen yet, and that's flag-signalling."

"There's no need for it," said Walter, "so long as the wire can tell us what we want; but there are signallers with the cavalry ahead. I've two with this lot, and all the scouts (those chaps you see riding out on the flanks) are trained signallers and have both their flags and a lamp with them. The cavalry have a helio too, but you can't always rely on being able to use that when you want it in this climate."

By this time they had crossed the little stream in the bottom of the valley, and as they rounded the bend of the road leading up to the top

of the hill, they came into view of a party which excited the liveliest interest among the British soldiers. It consisted of about forty French cavalry-men who had evidently been taken prisoners, and who, dismounted and under a guard of half-a-dozen hussars, were squatting along the side of the road under the shelter of the low wall bounding the village churchyard. In the churchyard itself were their horses, picketed and fastened together and watched by a sentry on foot, who walked up and down with an important manner, his carbine resting easily in the hollow of his arm. The prisoners did not seem particularly cast down by their misfortunes. Some of them had fallen asleep, others were quietly smoking, and Walter was amused at one man, who made a little smiling grimace and shrugged his shoulders, as he happened to catch his eye. The prisoners were all dragoons, and the British soldiers were much interested in their dress. The old-fashioned brass helmet, with its plume of coarse horsehair, the ill-fitting blue jacket, and the clumsy booted overalls, all gave rise to many criticisms among Walter's men, accustomed to the neatness and smartness of dress which characterises the British cavalry.

A little further up the hill, one of the houses of the village had been converted into a temporary hospital,

and surgeons, both French and British, were busy there. The windows were open, and as the Fusiliers passed moans, cries, and snatches of conversation in French and English came floating to their ears. Two wounded hussars, Englishmen this time, were sitting outside the door, one with his head all wrapped in bandages which only left one eye visible, the other having one arm bound up and strapped tightly to his side. The man with the bound-up head snatched up his busby as the Fusiliers came along, and waved it vigorously, his only visible eye twinkling with enjoyment; his spirits at any rate were not at all depressed by his injuries. The other was very pale, and smiled faintly when Walter asked him how far off the enemy were. "I don't know much about it sir," he answered; "I only saw them in the distance." Walter signed to his party to lead on, and stopped for a moment to interrogate the hussar. "I suppose it was a bullet hit you then?" "No, sir, I wasn't 'it by nothin'." My blarsted old mare crossed her legs while we was cantering down some roughish ground over yonder, and gave me a concussion and a broken collar-bone. Nice job! I could 'ave done that at 'ome without comin' all this way; and now I'll miss all the fun." The poor fellow swore under his breath, and Walter ran on after his command.

(To be continued.)

AN OLD HAND.

As seven o'clock chimed from the City clocks, the swinging doors opened to admit the day-nurses. In the small ward the tired night-nurse has already made six beds; but the big ward is the property of the day-nurses, and they begin work at the first bed by the fireplace.

It is winter and a dark morning. The gas is lighted, and by its gleam a convalescent patient is collecting the breakfast plates and mugs from the lockers and carrying them into the kitchen to be washed in due time by the ward-maid.

The probationer places a chair at the end of the bed. The quilt, top-sheet and blankets are removed, one blanket being left to cover the patient who is gently rolled from side to side while the under-sheets are drawn tightly and tucked in, until the little patient is left lying in unwrinkled peace and coolness.

The next bed contains a curious figure. Mrs. Toskins has a large white face; her high forehead is ornamented by curtains of faded sandy hair; her very small eyes are closed; she wears a complicated expression denoting genteel forbearance, better days, and the decayed gentlewoman; her mouth and long upper lip are pursed up into firm disapproving wrinkles, as though an unsavoury object were being held to her resigned nose. The large and bony hands issuing from the cuffs of her nightgown are crossed in an attitude of repose. On the locker by her bed stand a Bible, a prayer-book, a copy of Sankey's hymns, a scripture text-book, while from under

her pillow peeps a volume bearing the satisfactory title DEATHBED TRIUMPHS.

"Well, Mrs. Toskins," says the nurse skinning the bed, "how do you do this morning?"

"A wretched night," replies Mrs. Toskins; "but all the Lord sends is for the best."

"You ate some breakfast, I see."

"Oh, my dear, a mouthful of thin bread-and-butter."

"Why is there an egg-cup?" asks the nurse.

"To be sure, I just tasted an egg to please night-nurse."

There is silence while the bed-makers work their way down the ward. When they are at a safe distance Mrs. Toskins languidly opens her eyes, resting them with a disapproving expression on a basin of hot water standing on the locker by her side. "'Eving knows I ain't fit to wash myself, nor I don't need to neither. They're always worritin' with soap and water 'ere; it's 'ealthy, they says. I know I 'ad an aunt 'as never 'ad 'er 'ealth and wot died through takin' a foot-bath."

"Law!" exclaims the patient in the next bed.

"Yes, that I 'ad," says Mrs. Toskins importantly; "and," she continues in an undertone, "the nurses 'ere is imperent too. When that young one was washing my back, I says to 'er, 'The Lord must wash us,' I says. 'Oh!' says she, 'the Lord don't undertake backs.'"

Mrs. Toskins unwinds her towel and discloses a bit of sticky brown Windsor soap, which she rubs on a

piece of lint, continuing her plaint the while. "An' they don't believe as I've lost my appetite. All I know is that when my sister Mrs. Spanker's eldest come to see me last week, 'Oh my! Aunt, you do look peaked,' she says; 'ain't there nothink as you could feel to fancy?' 'Lavinia Ann,' I says, 'if you was to bring me melted diminds I couldn't touch 'em,—and they cast up an egg to me!'" Mrs. Toskins waves the wet lint in the air and looks resentfully at the distant nurses.

"Ah," says Mrs. Stubbins, "eggs is my fancy; I asked 'em to send me up a few when my girl come. 'Why, Mother,' she says, 'eggs is twopence each.' 'Go on,' I says; 'you'll get 'em from the Rectory.' 'Oh!' says she, 'we don't get nothink now this new Encumbrance is come.'"

Mrs. Toskin puts away her towel and brush; she sees the nurses approaching and replaces her devotional works in a prominent position. "The Lord shall supply our need," she murmurs, as a probationer approaches to remove the basin. "What did they give yer?" she resumes in a business-like tone as the basin disappears.

"Oh! flannen, and drippin', an that," says Mrs. Stubbins.

"Ah! drippin' 's a 'elp; I like a bit o' drippin' an' bread myself. I lay your girl ain't been to Mothers' Meetin's an' early service an' that while you've been abed."

"Oh, yes, she 'ave. I says to 'er pertikler afore I come; I says, 'Ere,' I says, 'you look out for the drippin'.'"

Mrs. Toskins smiles. "Depend upon it, Mrs. Stubbins," she says, "while you've been layin' abed your 'Arriet's been 'avin' a game. As the 'oly Bible says, train up a child and away they go."

Mrs. Stubbins made no answer.

Mrs. Toskins has been in longer than any one. She is the *protégée* of a lady in the town. When the doctor was asked to admit Mrs. Toskins he did not refuse; the fact of her being in made no difference to him, while the fact of her being out, and himself disobliging, made a considerable difference, inasmuch as her patron was a rich invalid and the mother of a large and ailing family. Mrs. Toskins therefore was admitted for a tumour which made work impossible to her, as well as depriving her of sleep and appetite. She had been in for some months, and as yet no one had been able to afford her any relief, for the reason that no one had been able to detect the enlargement. Morning after morning the house-surgeon had felt, and listened, and tapped; day after day did the visiting surgeons and physicians, surrounded by a band of students, accompanied by a sister and attended by a staff-nurse bearing a clean towel, a throat-spatula, and an ink-bottle, visit this obscure and interesting case, which alternately quoted Scripture, overwhelmed them with thanks, and begged them to operate. Nothing short of an operation would relieve her; of this she was convinced, and, as she observed, she ought to know, her brother-in-law having suffered from fits.

Mrs. Toskins, in addition to the pain which she suffered from the tumour, was subject to extraordinary and inexplicable rises of temperature. One evening the impudent young probationer, already alluded to, approached her swiftly and, taking the thermometer from under her arm, shook it down saying: "Let me hold it for you, Mrs. Toskins; I can see that your hand shakes, so that you cannot keep it steady, and friction will send the mercury up to fever-height. Of course you did not know."

Mrs. Toskins's small eyes shone

with a malignant gleam as she thanked the nurse.

By ten o'clock each morning the ward is in perfect order; the long table a mass of ferns and flowers, the brass syringes as bright as the long-suffering second probationer can make them, the nurses waiting in their clean aprons for the doctors. Nick, the black cat, sits by the fire dozing; the fish-diets will not be up till half-past twelve. The Matron disapproves of Nick: he is not anti-septic, and she has arranged for him to have a dose on the first opportunity; but Nick is the adored of twenty night-nurses and a ward-maid; consequently opportunity and Nick never occur at the same moment.

"Where's that cat?" says the dispenser on his occasional visits to the ward.

"'Oo, sir?" says the ward-maid, making a great clatter with the scrubbing-brush.

"That black cat of yours; give him to me."

"Oh! sir, I couldn't tell you where 'e is; 'e's 'ere and there is Nick."

And as yet the dispenser's labour has been in vain.

A scuffling of feet in the passage heralds the doctors. The staff-nurse rushes to the table and seizes some towels and ink-bottles which she distributes. The sister will go round with the physician whose week it is; if a second doctor comes during this time he must take the staff-nurse, and should a third arrive he must go humbly with the probationer.

The ward is very quiet now, the only sound being the monotonous chant of *ninety-nine, ninety-nine* from the chest-cases being listened to. The doctor pauses by an old woman who has just come back to the ward, having been isolated after operation. "Champagne," he murmurs, feeling her pulse. The house-

physician takes down the diet-card and writes.

"Will that suit you, Granny?" says the doctor.

"Oh! I dessay, sir," replies the old woman, "if I can 'ave it 'ot with a bit o' sugar."

Mrs. Toskins is reading *DEATHBED TRIUMPHS* which she took up as the doctors entered the ward; she is not, however, so engrossed that she cannot take note of what is going on.

"A good operation like that 'ud ease me," she whispers to her neighbour; "but you see, they won't do it; they favours some. Nurse told me they done 'er in a private room with all the students and a 'eap o' doctors lookin' on, and two nurses all to 'erself a day and night special. A rare fuss they make over that old woman! I dunno what the reason is, but some can 'ave their insides seen to and others can't; that's a sure thing."

"I never 'eard what she 'ad done," says Mrs. Stubbins soothingly; "may be as they didn't do much."

"Ah! they didn't go to all that trouble for nothink, depend upon it; they took a nice bit;" and Mrs. Toskins in an aggrieved manner turns the page to the next deathbed.

"Well," muses Mrs. Stubbins, "they're wonderful 'andy. When my 'usban's mother come out o' the Infirmary, after fallin' up the wash'us steps and smashin' of 'er nose some-thin' cru'l through 'avin' general debility,—'er nose was as flat as my 'and—my 'usban' was surprised; 'e didn't think they'd a took the pains with sich a ole woman."

"Now Mrs. Toskins," says a nurse approaching with a plate, "here is your fish; don't look so doleful."

"Oh, my dear, I was thinking of my operation."

"Don't think about that; it may never happen."

"Well, my dear, if the Lord wants

my inside 'E must 'ave it; 'E'll know 'ow to put it to a better use than ever I 'ave." Mrs. Toskins covered her face with a large handkerchief and sniffed with noisy resignation.

"Why, Mrs. Toskins, you will very likely be discharged next week; won't you be glad to be out and at work again?"

"They don't turn me out like that," said Mrs. Toskins as she watched the nurse's retreating figure, "nor I sha'n't do any work neither; I ain't fit, not now it's pleased the Lord to take my 'ealth."

"I 'eard Nurse speakin' of a 'ome the other day," says Mrs. Stubbins.

"No fear," says Mrs. Toskins, "no 'omes for me! I know 'em, I've been

in a tidy lot; the livin's poor and they're always spyin'."

"We have not operated," replied the house-surgeon, "for the reason that there is happily nothing on which to operate. We have kept you for six months, and we now consider that a more active life and regular work are indicated in your case."

The doors swung back to admit the porters and the carrying-chair, into which Mrs. Toskins was packed accompanied by the inside which she so reluctantly entertained.

"Good-bye," said Mrs. Stubbins.

"The Lord 'ath purvided, an' the Lord will purvide," piously replied Mrs. Toskins.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

I.

THE ONLY WAY.

LIKE him, of whom the poet sings,
 Across the centuries afar
 We scan the waste of earthly things
 And know not clearly where we are ;
 Nor if the century we're in
 Be that which we're accustomed to,
 Or if the world's great age begin
 Anew.

On algebraic tokens weird,
 On decimals, I daily pore ;
 By these my mind is nowise cleared ;
 They leave me where I was before.
 By decimals correctly done
 Can Speculation e'er be taught
 To learn if Time begins at *one*
 Or *nought* ?

I read the Press : with fancy bold
 They picture on its mother's knee
 A child that can't be two years old
 Before it reach the age of three ;
 For though the babe in lusty youth
 May seem externally to thrive,
 He is not (as a simple truth)
 Alive.

He is not there ; he's simply *nil* ;
 His mortal race is not begun ;
 He's in the Ewigkeit, until
 He gain the mystic age of one.
 Yet why pursue this mental train
 By false analogy beguiled ?
 A century is not ('tis plain)
 A child.

Put thus the case : a twelvemonth needs
 Twelve months arranged in order due
 (Which e'en Chronology concedes
 Is not demonstrably untrue) ;
 Yet here we find an æon starts
 With (accidentally, no doubt)
 All A.D. One's component parts
 Left out !

I sit in doubt upon the fence ;
 'Tis plain our dates are out of joint ;
 Perchance a year has no contents,
 And A.D. One's a simple point.
 These themes the fire of discord fan ;
 These kindle fratricidal strife,
 And foster enmity 'twixt man
 And wife.

Naught can avail ; it profits not
 To question in these island climes
 What laws may govern Time, and what
 The correspondents of *THE TIMES*.
 Hail, then, to His august decree,
 Who, seated high on Potsdam's throne,
 Proclaims the Nineteenth Century
 Is gone !

Poor purblind mortals here below
 But think and guess ; to know is His ;
 And when He says a thing is so,
 We question not ; it simply *is*.
 Let Pedantry its truths infer
 From calculation dark and dim ;
 Let them be right,—I'd sooner err
 With Him.

A. G.

II.

To the Editor of "*Macmillan's Magazine*."

SIR,

Stupidity has its compensations. I have the stupidest head in the world for figures,—for many other things too, no doubt, but certainly for figures ; and this, I take it, must be the reason why this question of the twentieth century which is so mightily exercising wiser heads than mine seems to me so extremely simple. So far as I have seen, only one of the disputants has come near to the right answer, and that was Sir Edward Reed in a letter printed in *THE TIMES* of

January 1st, 1900. Surely, Sir, those who maintain that the twentieth century began on the first day of January, 1900, are right, and those who maintain that it will not begin till the first day of January, 1901, are also right? The first are right from the point of view of common-sense ; the second are right from the point of view of what may be called our official chronology. This explanation will probably satisfy neither side ; but at least I will try to make my position clear,—though I am perfectly

prepared to find, or at least to be told, that I have made it clear to myself alone.

A man begins to live at the moment of his birth. Let us say that little Alfred (to borrow an illustration from *THE TIMES*) was born on January 1st, 1800. At the expiration of his first twelve months Alfred will obviously be a year old, and he will begin the second year of his life on January 1st, 1801. It is equally obvious that he will begin his hundredth year on January 1st, 1899, and complete it on December 31st, 1899, and that, if no untimely fate intervenes, he will pass into the second century of his (let us trust meritorious) existence on January 1st, 1900.

Nobody, I suppose (except, perhaps, Sir Herbert Stephen and the Editor of *THE TIMES*), will gainsay me so far. Let me now, with all reverence, substitute for my imaginary individual the Founder of the Christian religion. It will, I take it, be granted that in His human form He was a year old at the expiration of His first twelve months, and immediately afterwards began the second year of His existence. The exact moment of His birth is not and, we may assume, never will be precisely known, but it is agreed that from that moment dates the commencement of what we call the Christian Era. That era, then, completed its first year at the expiration of its first twelve months, and according to the law of arithmetic, as I learned it at my school, began its second year on the first day of January Anno Domini One.

So far, surely, common-sense has held its course unchecked; but now steps in what I have ventured to call official chronology. At some period in the first half of the sixth century after the birth of Christ one Dionysius

Exiguus (the Little), the most renowned theologian and astronomer of his day, proposed to substitute the Christian for the Greek and Roman Eras, which had respectively measured the course of time from the year of the first Olympiad and the year of the founding of Rome, or in other words and roughly speaking, from 776 B.C. and from 753 B.C. It is at this point that the trouble begins. This exiguous Dionysius,—it seems doubtful whether the epithet referred to his stature or to his humility, but I think it must have been to his stature—this little Dionysius, I say, also determined that the new era should begin with the first day of the year One; in other words that it should be exactly one year old at the moment of its birth. The first century of the Christian Era therefore numbered not one hundred, but one hundred and one years. We have been suffering from this most unpractical joke ever since.

The intentions of an individual who died upwards of thirteen hundred years ago must always be in some measure a matter of speculation; and one would naturally therefore be loth to discredit the learned Dionysius with such a preposterous plan. Indeed I had always supposed it to be the invention of some ingenious individual who had the wit to see that in no other way was his theory tenable. I find it, however, recorded on the authority of the Astronomer-Royal that it has been agreed in chronology to call the first year of the Christian Era A.D. 1; it also appears that there are in existence two letters of Dionysius which prove that arrangement to have been his deliberate intention.

To prefer what is bizarre, distracting, and uncomfortable to what is simple, straightforward, and in the natural order of things has always been regarded by a certain class of

minds as a mark of superior intelligence. It is such as these who think there is much to be said for the theory that Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays, and are certain that Sir Philip Francis could not have written Junius's Letters because he is more likely to have written them than anybody else. Like the old lady in the satire these lofty souls will be at infinite pains to drink their tea by stratum and tell the time of day by algebra. They of course will continue to call Dionysius blessed, and to maintain his arrangement to be the only possible one by such wild and whirling arguments as the columns of THE TIMES exhibited for our edification during the close of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. And of all these arguments surely, Sir, the most amazing is that which would parallel the counting of years with the counting of coins. A coin is a material substance which (they tell me) may be seen and handled. The year has no actual existence; it is an airy nothing by which civilised communities have agreed to mark the course of time. I must confess that my stupidity is unable to conceive any possible analogy between the two processes of reckoning.

Here, Sir, I would respectfully sub-

mit, the matter rests, once and for all. As there is, I believe, no law compelling people to adopt the official chronology, it will be open to those who prefer plain common-sense to even the most ingenious paradox to call the present the first year of the twentieth century; while astronomers, mathematicians, and other such official or quasi-official persons will, I suppose, adopt the Dionysian misreckoning. Indeed the question seems to me to stand on the same footing as that other question of the orthography of Indian names. No sensible man, who wished to make his meaning clear to the greatest number of persons, would care to write *Muhammadan* for Mahomedan, or *Bharatpur* for Bhurtpore; but the Government of India has issued an edict in favour of these and other equally senseless monstrosities, and the India Office having presumably acquiesced, the official servants of these departments, when writing with official pens, must perforce obey.

Such, Sir, is the solution of this tremendous question to which my native stupidity has brought me.

I remain, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

DIONYSIUS MINIMUS.

January 19th, 1900.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA.

BY A SOLDIER.

It is impossible to look back upon the events of the last four months without being struck in the first instance by the enormous disparity between the force which it was thought would be equal to the task of reducing the Boer Republics to submission and that which at the eleventh hour we are putting into the field. When it was authoritatively announced that the field-force for South Africa would consist of a complete army-corps with a cavalry division, in addition to the 10,000 men already in Natal and the small force of infantry at the Cape, the general tendency among the vast majority of people whom one met was undoubtedly to regard the Government as going to rather unnecessary expense in order to make the successful termination of the campaign swift and certain. The few soldiers who professed anxiety as to the position of Sir George White's troops in Natal, the British forces there being dangerously dispersed and in unpleasant proximity to the enemy's frontier, their sole line of communications within easy striking distance of his mobile commandos, were jeered at as alarmists, as pro-Boers, and hardly dared express their fears except in the privacy of home or of their clubs.

The whole country, in fact, went mad about the soldiers. As the reservists flocked into the depôts with hardly an absentee, as ship after ship steamed away from the crowded jetties amid scenes of the wildest enthusiasm, as the music-halls resounded nightly with the

strains of patriotic music and the yells of patriotic (if slightly elevated) citizens, the war-fever increased apace; and it was only fanned into still wilder fury when on Saturday, October 20th, the news of the British victory at Talana Hill was flashed over the wires. "At last!" was the general cry of exultation; "Majuba is indeed avenged." And when hard on the heels of this came the news of the fierce fighting at Elandslaagte, of the dash and gallantry of the Gordon Highlanders, of the steadfast courage of the Johannesburgers in the ranks of the Imperial Light Horse, of the victorious assault of the Boer position, the charges of the cavalry, and the headlong flight of the enemy, the people went completely mad.

But a change was already near. The first hint of danger, the first sign that the Boers were not altogether contemptible opponents, was conveyed in the telegram announcing that Colonel Möller with his hussars and mounted infantry, who after Talana Hill had disappeared into the mist in pursuit of the flying enemy, had been captured and was already on his way to Pretoria. Then came the news that General Yule, who had succeeded General Symonds in command of the forces at Dundee, had marched in the night from his camp, and, leaving his baggage and wounded behind him, had vanished into the wilderness. This made the people pause. It became apparent to all but those

who deem it inconsistent with their patriotism to allow themselves to think a British reverse possible, that General Yule had retired simply because his position was untenable and was in fact already dangerously compromised; and some of us began to wonder if this war was going to prove after all such a simple thing as it had first appeared.

The action of Rietfontein, hailed as another British victory, which was really fought in order to extricate General Yule from the clutches of the foe, and which happily had that result, closed for the time the list of British successes which had so flattered the excited anticipations of the mob. General Yule struggled safely into Ladysmith, his escape due in great measure to the guidance and help of Colonel Dartnell, a veteran in African warfare and commandant of the Natal Police, trailing after him a battered column of jaded and exhausted soldiers. He had escaped, but by a hair's breadth. All his wounded and baggage had perforce been abandoned; neither officers nor men had any kit or belongings except what they carried on their backs; but he was safe, as most of us thought at the time, for who imagined that the Boers would dare to attempt the reduction of Ladysmith itself? True, the place was not a place of arms; of fortifications there were none, beyond the stout hearts of the men who held it for their Queen, but the idea that the Boers would dare to encounter a compact force of some 9,000 British troops flushed as they were with victory, was too absurd to entertain for a moment. Sir George White and his advisers, however, though still possibly inclined to somewhat underrate their adversary, gauged the situation more accurately. Both at Talana Hill and at Elandslaagte some hint had

been given of the power of the Boer artillery by the shells which screamed over the heads of our gunners fighting at long ranges, and urgent requests for heavy guns were flashed over the wires, happily still standing, to Durban and the Cape. Fortunately for us British men-of-war were lying at both places, and more fortunately still on board one of them was Captain Percy Scott, the leading gunnery expert of the Royal Navy. His inventive genius quickly devised means for mounting long-ranging naval guns for shore service, and in the *Powerful* he found the necessary appliances for the work he required to be done.

While the naval artificers were working night and day to strengthen the armament of the British troops, the toils were being drawn tighter round Sir George White till he determined to strike out fiercely on the first opportunity, and compel the enemy to keep their distance in future. It was not long before such an opportunity presented itself. On a ridge some four miles north-east of the British position the Boers had mounted a formidable battery, shells from which came into our lines causing constant annoyance, and to which our field-batteries were naturally unable to make an effective reply. Between Ladysmith and this ridge the country was fairly open, though rugged and rock-crowned heights bounded the plain on either hand. Against these guns General White determined to advance, sending out on the previous night a small detachment of Irish Fusiliers and Gloucesters with a mountain-battery to guard his left flank from attack by the Free Staters, who were reported to be mustering thickly somewhere between Ladysmith and Van Reenen's Pass. Such was the general idea of his operations; their result, it is no exaggeration to

say, caused the greatest alarm in England.

It appears that as the main attack advanced the Boers withdrew from the ridge, the objective of the advance, and melted away into the wilderness before our troops. It was decided to continue our movement, which was done with but trifling opposition, till another four miles had been covered. Suddenly a fierce attack was commenced against the British right. General White and his Staff scented the danger and a retirement was ordered. The retreat commenced; the enemy, emboldened, pressed in ever increasing numbers on our right; every rock concealed a marksman, on every hill-top appeared a gun. Rifle-bullets and shells hummed and tore through our ranks. Fiercely our gunners strove to meet the onslaught; steadfastly our infantry vollied at the hill-sides where lurked the enemy. Battalion after battalion was hurried from the centre to reinforce the right; but the pressure was too great; our retirement became more and more hurried, less and less orderly. No more reinforcements could be spared from the centre, now reduced to one battalion, and matters looked critical indeed when the deep roar of heavy artillery intervening on our behalf told the General and his anxious Staff that the naval guns had arrived and were taking their part in the battle. It was indeed time. The effect on the enemy was almost instantaneous. As the heavy shells, charged with Lyddite, burst among the rocks which sheltered their riflemen and pitched with terrible effect in their batteries, they withdrew from the attack, allowing General White and his shaken army to regain the improvised defences of Ladysmith. This was bad enough, but worse was to come. To the General came panting a half-

scared Kaffir, the bearer of a hurried note from Colonel Carlton to the effect that his mules had been stampeded during the march by some of the enemy riding through his column in the dark, that he had lost his guns and ammunition, but that he had occupied some high ground near his position and was determined to hold out as long as he could. During the battle which was just over the sounds of firing to the west had informed Sir George that Colonel Carlton was hotly engaged. That firing had now ceased, and the inference was obvious. With his exhausted and beaten troops it was hopeless to endeavour to extricate the Fusiliers and Gloucesters. Nothing could be done but hope for the best, and even this gleam of hope was soon dispelled by the arrival of the bandmaster of the Fusiliers with a tale of surrender and a request for ambulances. After heroically maintaining an unequal contest for eight or nine hours, their ammunition gone, the little force had no option but to surrender. Thus about a thousand men were added to the swelling tale of British captives at Pretoria.

While fortune was thus adverse to our arms in Natal, on the other side of the theatre of war we were in but little better plight. On the western frontier of the hostile Republics, or, to speak more correctly, close to that frontier, we had occupied at the beginning of the war the little township of Mafeking and the more important mining centre of Kimberley. At the first named place that experienced soldier Colonel Baden-Powell, with an irregular force of his own raising some thousand strong, was invested by a considerable body of the Boers within two days of the expiration of their ultimatum. Two days later Kimberley was also surrounded. In the latter place were four companies of regular

infantry of the North Lancashire Regiment and about fifteen hundred Colonial levies, the whole under the command of Colonel Kekewich. It is needless to endeavour to follow in detail the course of events on the western frontier. The public interest was centred on Natal, and most of us felt that the defenders of Mafeking and Kimberley were fully equal to the task of keeping at bay an enemy who was always averse to risking his life in an assault upon entrenchments held by resolute men. Meanwhile we wondered when the invasion of Cape Colony was to begin. At the opening of the war it lay practically defenceless before an invader. A mere handful of troops held De Aar and one or two other important strategical points; the loyalty of the great majority of the Dutch inhabitants of the Colony was open to the gravest suspicion; yet for three weeks none of the enemy crossed the Orange River, and then it was only a small force which eventually occupied Colesberg. So far, though on the defensive and praying for the speedy arrival of the troops from England, we had escaped any serious disaster. On November 9th the first transport arrived at Cape Town, and on the same day the Boers made a determined attempt to overpower the defenders of Ladysmith, an attempt which was repulsed with loss.

Meanwhile at home we waited anxiously for news of the movements of Sir Redvers Buller, who had landed at Cape Town on October 31st, the day after the disastrous sortie from Ladysmith. The general anticipation was that he would attempt a diversion by advancing with the bulk of his forces across the Orange River on the Free State capital, a movement which it was confidently believed would draw the enemy from Ladysmith and Kimberley to take part in the defence of their

own country. That such was General Buller's original plan is even yet generally believed; but it soon became apparent that this design had been abandoned. A large force was hurried on to Natal, while Lord Methuen, Sir William Gatacre, and General French (who had made a daring escape from Ladysmith in the last train permitted to leave that place) were sent to De Aar, Queens-town, and Naauwpoort respectively, with orders to make preparations for a forward movement. Of these three officers probably General Gatacre enjoyed the largest measure of public confidence. Lord Methuen indeed had seen service in Egypt and on the Indian frontier, but he had exercised no command in the field, while General French, though his name as a cavalry-leader stood high, was a man little known to the public at large. General Gatacre, on the contrary, was believed to have done exceedingly good service both in the war with Chitral, in the Tirah campaign, and in the Soudan, though he had also won the reputation of working his men with somewhat extreme severity. Still he was regarded as a tried and able soldier, and it was confidently anticipated that he, like General Buller, would render an excellent account of himself when the fit moment came.

At home meanwhile the warlike spirit had in no way abated. Though we had met with no success worthy of the name, yet the British soldier had won fresh laurels, and had shown that he was animated by the same dauntless spirit which had in the past made our infantry the wonder and admiration of Europe. Everywhere outnumbered, everywhere fighting against heavy odds, he had displayed splendid gallantry throughout; and we felt that this proof that our soldiers were as fine fighting men as

their forefathers more than balanced the reverses which had so far attended our arms. Yet the days passed, and the patience of the people began to be sorely tried. The Boers, who had occupied Colenso early in the month, began to show themselves, first in small parties and then in increasing force, further south. On the 15th, an armoured train which had left Estcourt for Colenso to reconnoitre along the line was wrecked by the enemy, and the greater number of the troops occupying it taken prisoners. Within a week the enemy succeeded in cutting the wire between Estcourt (where the advanced troops of the force destined for the relief of Ladysmith were camped) and Maritzburg, and a day or two later threw shells into the British camp on the Mooi River. These signs of activity were disquieting, but public attention was for the moment distracted from Natal by the more exciting events on the western frontier.

Lord Methuen had concentrated a considerable British force at Orange River station, and it was freely stated by the correspondents permitted to accompany him that a movement for the relief of Kimberley was about to be initiated. On November 21st the movement began. On the 23rd the fortified position of Belmont was stormed by the Guards Brigade, who greatly distinguished themselves, though all the troops contributed to secure the victory. The attack was made at dawn, after a night-march, and appears to have succeeded admirably. It is worth noting that this was the first occasion on which these tactics were adopted during the war. Two days later came the news that Lord Methuen had again defeated the enemy at Enslin, though the effect of the victory was somewhat dis-
counted by the terrible casualty-

roll of the Naval Brigade, who carried the heights under a withering fire, both sailors and marines showing the most astonishing valour. It began to dawn upon the anxious watchers at home that a few more of such victories and the British army would be decimated; and we began then to hear for the first time murmurs at the tactics which could find no better solution for the problem of turning the enemy out of an entrenched position than a direct frontal attack, inevitably costly, on the strongest part of the enemy's entrenchments. However, the success of the manœuvre, if a sheer hurling of troops against the enemy's defences could be dignified by such a name, silenced for a time the majority of the critics. We were now approaching exciting times. In Natal after some slight skirmishes, in one of which (the action at Willow Grange) both sides claimed a victory, the road to Estcourt was at last cleared, and a general advance of the British troops towards Colenso began. In the clubs men were betting as to whether Ladysmith or Kimberley would be the first relieved, and though November 20th had come and gone and Sir George White was still closely invested, yet the general feeling was decidedly sanguine. The Government, however, in obedience to popular clamour for more troops, was busily preparing fresh reinforcements for the front. More reserves were called up, howitzer-batteries were placed under orders, and additional transports were chartered. Still there was no real anxiety as to the speedy success of our arms, and the relief of Kimberley at any rate was regarded as assured when on November 29th we heard of Lord Methuen having succeeded in forcing the passage of the Modder River after a very trying engagement which lasted a whole

day. On this occasion again he had employed his favourite tactics of a direct frontal attack against the position of the enemy, an attack which had once more cost us heavily, and which we all realised had been within an ace of failing. The voices of the critics began to be heard again, though Lord Methuen (in language which some thought unduly inflated) had especially remarked in his despatch that the position of the enemy with regard to the river made a turning movement impossible. However, he had gained the day; the river-barrier had been crossed, and it seemed that the speedy relief of Kimberley, which now professed itself able to hold out for six weeks without difficulty, seemed certain.

Trouble enough had dogged our steps during the war; surely, with Sir Redvers Buller accumulating a strong force for the relief of Ladysmith, Lord Methuen almost within touch of Kimberley, and Generals French and Gatacre busy with their preparations for an advance, the tide had turned at last, and the beginning of the end had come. The 10th of December is not so long past. We can all remember the accumulating horrors of that terrible week. First the news of the disaster to General Gatacre's force, which, after wandering about all night in the dark, stumbled in the dawn on the strongest part of the enemy's strong position, with the inevitable result of defeat and loss; then the repulse at Magersfontein due to precisely the same causes as the catastrophe at Stormberg; and, as if that was not enough, on Saturday December 15th all England was aghast on reading General Buller's despatch acknowledging his defeat on the Tugela.

Since then we have stood still, so far as the progress of the war is concerned, though the Government

lost no time in scrambling together every available man, gun, and horse, and hurrying them off in troops as reinforcements for our baffled leaders. The veteran Lord Roberts was hastily appointed to the supreme command with Lord Kitchener as his chief Staff-Officer; and the country, which had been momentarily staggered by the blow, is now gradually picking up heart and once more venturing to count on fresh British victories, which this time are to bring us some real and tangible advantages. When we say this we write at a moment when critical events are passing in Natal; when General Buller is almost certainly grappling with the foe who has held him at bay for so long, and all England, aware of the importance of the crisis, is holding her breath distracted with anxiety for news. How that struggle will end, will have ended ere these lines are published, we cannot pretend to forecast, nor would such an attempt have any interest for the intelligent reader. We need only say that Sir Redvers Buller is confronted by a problem more difficult and yet more urgent of solution than has fallen to the lot of any soldier of recent times. The enemy is as well armed and as numerous as are the British troops, and is led by men who are assuredly no novices in war; he fights in a country in every way favourable to him, and in every way unsuited to the regular soldiers of Britain; his front is protected by a wide and treacherous stream whose swift current may at any moment be swollen to an impassable torrent; and, perhaps as great as any of his other advantages, he fights conscious of having already defeated our soldiers in open battle. The odds are heavy.

It will be now perhaps more profitable if we turn our attention to the past events in the war as a

whole, and examine whether there is any cause discernible to account for the failure which has hitherto attended all our operations. The three great blows which have given us pause in this campaign were undoubtedly the actions of Stormberg, Magersfontein, and Colenso. All our readers will have read and re-read every account from the seat of war which could throw any light on these disasters. That disloyalty, and worse than disloyalty, is rife everywhere, and that our guides, on more than one occasion have played us false, is certain; it would be grossly unfair to our leaders to ignore this fact, though at the same time we cannot forget how well one of them, Colonel Pilcher, succeeded by also refusing to ignore it. But when every allowance has been made for the difficult conditions under which the war has hitherto been waged, it must be owned that the serious checks our generals have experienced all tell the same tale—of insufficient reconnoitring. Other errors were no doubt also committed. The letter from its correspondent with General Gatacre's force in *THE TIMES* of January 18th records indeed a woful catalogue of blunders. The General not only started with apparently only the haziest knowledge of his enemy's real position, but he was also hampered by the exhausted condition of his men when the sudden searching fire showed that the enemy's position had at last been reached. The fact that his men were exhausted at that early stage shows bad management somewhere. Lord Methuen appears to have made precisely the same mistake; he seems to have taken no pains to ensure the nature and object of his movement being known to the officers and men under his command; he seems to have taken equally little trouble to ascertain the true position

of the Boers by the close personal reconnaissance of a member of his Staff. Such a task, though full of danger, would have been readily undertaken by any of his Staff-officers, but none of them seems to have been given the opportunity. Sir Redvers Buller's reverse also showed the want of thorough reconnaissance; by which we must not be understood to mean that officers of the Staff had not visited as much of the ground as was possible and prepared elaborate sketches of such of the enemy's positions as were visible, but that no scouting over the ground immediately preceded the advance of the firing-line. Had our firing-lines been preceded by scouts some six hundred yards ahead, neither the reverse of Stormberg, Magersfontein, nor Colenso could have been anything like so serious. At Magersfontein they would certainly have discovered the existence of the Boer's wire entanglements, which would have probably led to the retirement, in silence and undiscovered, of the ill-fated Highland Brigade; at Stormberg they would have stumbled on the Boer position and so given the alarm to the men in rear; and at Colenso they would beyond a doubt have discovered the fact that the enemy had riflemen on the south bank of the river, a fact which appears not to have been even suspected till they opened a withering fire. It may be argued that at Magersfontein the night was so dark that no scouts could possibly have kept their directions and touch with the troops they were covering. In that case no night-march should have been attempted.

The fact is that we have all of late gone rather crazy over the subject of night-marches coupled with an attack at dawn. It may be that we are naturally rather an impatient people, desirous of reaching our goal

by a short cut, though we have not noticed this as a national weakness apart from our conception of tactics; but most certainly we appear to have hitherto failed to realise that modern weapons inevitably prescribe slow and cautious movements. In future, unless where one force has hopelessly out-maneuvred its opponents, great battles will not be decided in one day or two, but may even last for a week. Each step forward must be protected by entrenchments so as to secure it for good, and continual efforts must be made to envelope one or both flanks of the enemy. In fact the warfare of the future will be a war of communications, in which the deciding factor will be the possession of mobility and the intelligent use of the spade, assuming, that is to say, that the combatants are equally matched as regards their weapons. The advantages which modern firearms confer on the defence as opposed to the attack make it inevitable that in future each army will endeavour to so place itself that its adversary must either attack it or fall back. This result will naturally be best secured by a threat to the road or railway by which the enemy receives his supplies. Modern armies are exceedingly sensitive to every interruption to their communications. The road must be kept clear, or the army must perish.

An attempt has been made to attack the Government on account of the reverses we have met with in the war, and to prove that these are due to insufficient preparations in time of peace. This is so obvious

that it appears absolute waste of time to argue the question. The Government did not make in time of peace the preparations which were required to ensure success in war. But on the other hand is there any conceivable government of this country which would have been suffered to make really adequate preparations for war on a large scale? The answer is perfectly clear. Had large sums been demanded last spring for military preparations, the Government certainly would not have got them, and in a time of peace no British government in living memory would have dared to ask for them. Wherefore let us not howl down the Government for omitting to do what every cabinet since the first cabinet of all would have equally omitted, but let us on the contrary endeavour to raise an educated public opinion on military matters in this country. Let us cease to be at the mercy of the expert. There is nothing so very recondite in military science after all, as our friends the Boers are teaching us. It is very much a matter of common-sense, added to a certain amount of study and as much practical experience as possible. Let us at the same time recall the old story, "Take care of Dowb." There has been a good deal too much of taking care of Dowb in this war, which may not be altogether without its connection with our ill success. Ill success, did we say? We hope that by the time these words appear the days of our ill success will have passed, never to return. Let us also hope that the lessons they have taught us will not be forgotten.